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TO
ALASK
WARDMAN

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TRIP TO ALASKA

A Narrative

OF WHAT WAS SEEN AND HEARD DURING

A

SUMMER CRUISE IN ALASKAN WATERS

BY

GEORGE WARDMAN

UNITED STATES TREASURY AGENT AT THE SEAL ISLANDS

SAN FRANCISCO

SAMUEL CARSON & CO. PUBLISHERS

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A TRIP TO ALASKA.

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A TRIP TO ALASKA.

CHAPTER I.

SAN FRANCISCO TO NANAIMO.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been written about Alaska there seems to be an amazing lack of general information among the people of the United States concerning that country, its inhabitants, climate, resources, and even its extent. People ask, "Is it very cold in Alaska?" when there is a range of nearly twenty degrees in latitude, reaching from fifty-four to seventy-two north and a variation in temperature of one hundred and fifty degrees, Fahrenheit, between the hottest summer and coldest winter weather. The general idea of Alaska is based upon crude notions concerning Sitka, and are not much more valuable than would have been the notions of a wild African cast away upon Key West four hundred years ago about the region now known as the United States.

In the summer of 1879 the writer obtained permission from Hon. John Sherman, at that time Secretary of the Treasury, to proceed in the United States revenue steamer "Richard Rush," Captain Bailey, on her cruise from San Francisco to Sitka, the Fur Seal Islands, the Sea Otter Grounds, and other points in Alaskan waters. The voyage proved exceedingly interesting, and the author gave an account of what he saw and heard to certain newspapers, in a desultory way, but he has been led to believe that his observations may be read in a more permanent form with interest, and he hopes with profit, by those who may be in search of information concerning Alaska.

Going from California, or the east, to Sitka, the most practical route of travel is by steamer from San Francisco. The course is coastwise to Cape Flattery, and then up the Straits of Fuca and by inland passages to the objective point. The interest of the voyage to the tourist begins at the mouth of the Straits, where the vessel leaves the open sea and enters a broad channel with Washington Territory upon one hand and Vancouver Island on the other. From this point to Sitka the scene is one of varied interest to the traveller, and quite free from the usual discomforts of ocean travel.

De Fuca, who reported the discovery here of a great inland passage to Hudson's Bay or some Mediterranean sea, gave a wonderfully imaginative account of the rich and rare products of the country and the wealth of the natives, who were said to be decorated with gold and silver ornaments in great profusion, thus proving very conclusively that he knew nothing about the country, but had only been mildly endorsing in 1640 what De Fonte, another alleged Spanish navigator, told about as early as 1582. This bold liar, whose existence, however, was never fully established, related that he had found a northwest passage through, in about latitude fifty, to the Atlantic, along which he sailed for three hundred leagues, till he met a ship from Boston, commanded by a Captain Slade, who gave him not only a succinct account of the passage, but sold him charts of the entire coast on both sides for ten thousand dollars. The charts never appeared in print, having been mislaid somewhere on board the purchaser's ship. It is more than strange they have never been published. There is no doubt that a book was published purporting to have been written by De Fonte, but the fact that it was published in English, by an Edinburgh house, leads to the suspicion that De Fonte never existed outside of the print-shop.

At all events, though Captain Cook discovered and named Cape Flattery, before being barbecued by the Sandwich Islanders, even then the fact of the existence of such an opening of the sea into the land as the Straits of Fuca was doubted. When Captain Vancouver arrived off the coast, only a degree below, he wrote doubtingly of it, and denied the existence of the Columbia River even, after having passed its very mouth. He referred to the reports of such openings as the probable creations of "closet philosophers." After having passed up to Nootka Sound as "one of the openings" to Fuca Straits, he dropped down to Cape Flattery, and to his great astonishment soon found himself sailing in an inland sea about fifteen miles in width and without bounds to the eastward as far as he could at first observe. It was not till the evening of the second day of his cruise that he arrived at what proved to be the archipelago.

Captain Vancouver went to work like the thorough navigator that he was, when once certain that there was something to be investigated, and he made a complete survey of all the inlets, channels, and shoals, not only in the Straits proper, but up to the head of Puget Sound, with all its ramifications; and to this

day, his is the best description of these waters extant, although he made his examination in 1792. His delight on getting out from the stormy, foggy sea over which he had been sailing for days and weeks, and passing through such scenes as the "Rush" came upon after the fog arose, may be better imagined than described, for this region was then in a primitive condition of unbroken forests, covering picturesque hills and snow-capped mountains that rear their hoary heads above the envious clouds. As we steamed up from the Pacific the mists clung about the hillsides till about eleven o'clock, when they arose somewhat on the northern shore, but clung to Washington Territory with great persistence till noon. The British side from the mouth of the Straits up as far as Victoria and beyond is climatically favored, having high mountains to break the force of the northerly winds, and a southern exposure sloping down to the water's edge, offering every inducement for summer residences and picnic grounds. The American side is more given to fogs and raw winds, which sweep across the fifteen miles of open water.

From a purely picturesque point of view this country is all that could be desired, and the farther one penetrates into the country the attractions for the tourist multiply.

The town of Victoria is beautifully situated, but it is a dead town. It was largely built up during the Fraser River gold excitement, which commenced in 1857, attracting hither thousands of miners who abandoned good diggings in California and arrived here in a starving condition, but confident of a revival of '49 flush times. They were doomed to disappointment and extreme suffering. Hundreds died of hunger and exposure, but thousands returned to California after undergoing almost incredible hardships. A few remained and made "grub" wages, but the great expectations proved fallacious, and as the prospects lessened and the diggings "petered out," Victoria began to decline and went down almost as fast as it grew. Rows of houses constructed at great cost now stand idle in the half-deserted city, which once enjoyed a considerable degree of commercial prosperity.

About thirty-five miles southeastward from Victoria, and at the entrance proper to Puget Sound, is Port Townsend, the American counterpart to British Victoria. It is a dilapidated place of an easy-going character, celebrated for dogs, drinking-shops, and a custom-house. We did not see Port Townsend, and what I say refers only to its general reputation. It may

be as moral and virtuous a place as a settlement of Shakers for aught the author knows personally. Above Port Townsend there are a number of small cities, the most ambitious at present being Seattle and Tacoma, the latter of which hopes to be the western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railway.

Passing Victoria we wind sharply around to the left between Trial and Discovery Islands, finding ourselves in a narrow channel, and we leave the Straits, Puget Sound, and Olympian Mountains away to the southward. The pretty little farms above and below Victoria all enjoy an air of apparent prosperity, green in verdure or brown in new-plowed fields, as we pass to the left of the once famous San Juan, about which we did not want to fight, but would not give up, and which, along with other islands around it, was awarded to us by good and kind King Wilhelm, now Emperor of Germany.

San Juan was for a long time a bone of contention between Uncle Sam and John Bull, but it was a sort of frontier paradise in its way. There were two military encampments upon the island, ours on the eastern and the British on the western side, both claiming and neither daring or caring to exercise civil or criminal jurisdiction over it. The troops were friendly

enough, and used to meet half way to play base ball, cricket, and other national games. As neither owned the property in fact, neither could or would collect taxes for years; and when it came to trying criminals for such pleasantries as killing people, that was a more delicate piece of business still, and the consequence was a man might murder an entire family and, if arrested, prove himself to be an American citizen or an English subject; and it was equal to an alibi or a plea of insanity—and much cheaper.

There is one thing, however, that San Juan is good for, and that is lime. It is an island of limestone, and if enough people would come out to this region and build a sufficient number of houses to create a demand for it, we might put San Juan through lime-kilns, and so get rid of it. But unless the Immigration Bounty Bill, or some similar bad measure, shall become a law, there is no telling when there will be a demand for San Juan lime.

The "San Juan question" was whether the main channel from the forty-ninth parallel going out to the sea by the way of the Straits of Fuca led through the Canal De Haro on that side of the island toward Vancouver, or through Rosario Straits, on the American side, the main

channel from our western land terminus at the forty-ninth parallel being, by the terms of the treaty under the Northwestern Boundary Commission, determined on as the national water-line.

Swinging around still farther to the left, as we pass San Juan, we catch a last glimpse of Mount Baker, sixty or seventy miles to the southward, covered with snow, and now we begin to pass away up the east side of Vancouver, but among countless islands which divide the waters here into channels, winding in and out, a labyrinth of land and water. On every side, behind and before, are rugged islands rising up out of the sea, and, with few exceptions, covered with evergreen trees at the tops, while those of a lighter, fresher green abound near the bases. The inspiring breeze which had helped us along up the Straits died away ere this, or is lost to us in the first great bend around from Victoria, and the blackened canvas of the energetic little steamer has been folded away as carefully as clean napkins. The air grows warm among these islands shortly after noon, and having walked the deck for an hour or so, it seemed like midsummer, while a thermometer swinging in the open air over the pilot-house indicated seventy-six above. Then we enter upon one of the most interesting little

runs experienced on this trip. This is the passage through Active Pass, where for about two miles we are led to port and starboard in short, sharp, quick turns, directed by our pilot, like a beginner pushed through the bewildering movements of a contra-dance.

At every turn new beauties come suddenly into view; new islands, new shapes, new scenery, with here and there an Indian rancheria or a somewhat civilized-looking shanty nestling among the trees. Occasionally a son of the forest (and sea) paddles his way along in his trusty "dug-out," as proud and independent as a Doge of Venice in his gondola; and it may be doubted if ever the Adriatic was so beautiful as this. The loveliest islands, the most inviting groves, the greenest mosses and brightest waters are seen everywhere.

Out of this, nature's pleasure grounds of lake and grove, we emerge into the Gulf of Georgia —a broad expanse of water stretching away to the westward beyond the horizon. On the right is a gap in a timbered promontory, marking the line where the forty-ninth parallel finds its jumping-off place in the extreme northwestern corner of the United States. Beyond this we soon have the mouth of Fraser River on our right, and all along on that side are snow-

capped mountains. Now we stem up through this broad inland sea for Nanaimo with no obstruction in our path, as far as the eye can see. We continue steaming up the gulf till, after a gorgeous sunset of crimson and gold, and a temperature down to fifty, we make a long curve of six or seven miles, still toward the left, and are now heading directly toward our starting point on the other side of the island in the morning.

We came to anchor in the snug little harbor of Nanaimo, a town of some eight hundred or nine hundred inhabitants, mostly Welsh, who gain a livelihood by digging coal. It should be said that Nanaimo coal is considered the best on the Pacific coast for steaming, for which reason it is freighted to all points up as high as Behring Straits, and as far south as San Diego. The town is situated on the eastern side of Vancouver's Island, about one hundred and forty miles from Cape Flattery, as we came, but across the island to the mouth of the Straits it is not more than forty or fifty miles.

Nanaimo is prettily situated, with rising wooded hills to the rear and a number of small islands lying in front, one of which, by its position and shape, forms a circular slip before the town, which, owing to the rise and fall of the tide, constitutes a natural dry-dock where ships

may be scraped and calking done in perfect safety. The enterprising Chinaman is here, and a telegraphic wire connects this place with Victoria. In spite of all advantages, however, the fact is, too much rain falls here. The spring is always backward, and the harvest seldom amounts to anything. It rains four or five times a day, altogether too much when it is kept up the year round.

Coal, however, is in good demand, and it is said the supply is insufficient to satisfy the wants of trade. The coal is run down in cars from the mines to the wharf and dumped through chutes on shipboard. Here our steamer filled all available space, fore and aft, giving her the appearance of a regular collier. With rain and coal so mixed as we had it, the contracted quarters on board became smaller and the neatness less conspicuous.

CHAPTER II.

IT RAINS.

ONE day on shipboard in northwestern waters in spring or early summer is very much like another; too much so under the circumstances and condition of affairs to be pleasant. Suppose the little "Rush," one hundred and ninety tons burden starting out at daybreak, after anchoring all night in consequence of thick weather. With a heavy rain all night and a dense fog to thicken the weather, it would be destruction to attempt to run through the darkness. At daylight there is no improvement so far as the weather is concerned, but daylight enables one to see land dimly once in a while on either hand. Sailing in the open sea and cruising among the Alaskan islands or the British Columbia archipelago are two entirely different matters. One may be prosecuted at night without great risk other than a collision with another ship, but when the mariner has islands to the right of him and to the left of him, as well

as ahead, all enveloped in fog and mist, the compass is a poor reliance without sharp eyesight and a knowledge of ambuscaded reefs and rocks lying in wait for the careless voyager. But to the start.

At half past two or three or four o'clock in the morning, our captain appears on deck with his calm good-natured face and clear blue eyes visible beneath the rim of his sou'-wester. He is enveloped from neck to heels in an oil-skin "jacket," like an overgrown yellow night-shirt. Peeping out below is a pair of rubber boots. The rain runs down out of the clouds as if the string opening a shower-bath had been pulled and the supply of water above was unlimited. The rain does not seem to be angry; it is not in a hurry; it does not try to be irritating or severe; it may not be a very cold rain. It is simply a rain running down straight and steady as if it was an old and every-day occurrence — no pretension nor airs — nothing but a plain rain attending to its regular duty and without any feeling in the matter.

The captain removes his meerschaum and says, "Good morning," as mildly and pleasantly as the rain streams down.

You respond and say still further, "It's a wet morning." The captain receives this intelli-

gence without any air of surprise, and if he is not occupied giving orders about getting underway, he may remark, "It rains very easy in this country."

That 's it exactly. Take it all the way up the coast from San Francisco to the Straits of Fuca, from Victoria to Sitka, from Sitka to the Seal Islands, and you may generally find it raining about as easily as it could possibly do if care had been taken to make it oil instead of water.

We get under way as soon after daylight as may be compatible with safety for the steamer. The rain slips down unceasingly. Mists shut out from view everything, unless on one side or the other a bank, a shade darker than the clouds, may be distinguished by trained eyes. It may be an island, a rock, or only a bank of fog thicker than the average mist. The captain, the officer of the deck, and the pilot say it is land, and tell the name of it. Against such an array of nautical opinion it would be folly for a landsman to contend. Call it land if you will. It looks very much as if we had land ahead, too, but the engines are steadily working, and we may be making eight knots an hour. We run through the apparent land ahead.

The rain continues to slide down, but everything goes on as quietly and systematically on

board as though this were a writing-school. The captain paddles around in his long yellow gown and softly stepping gum boots till five or six o'clock, when he sees everything all right, and having his position and bearings beyond a doubt, turns in, till breakfast time. The officer of the deck, who is also masquerading in sou'-wester, oil-skin and rubber boots, and the pilot similarly arrayed, remain on duty and receive the rain which glides down over the rims of their rubber helmets and oiled armor as if it had no more purpose there than lightning on an iron-rod to get down and leave no mark.

At eight bells the officer of the deck goes below, being relieved by a brother similarly arrayed, who acts as conductor to the rain for the ensuing four hours.

The pilot is temporarily relieved for breakfast by the captain, after which he returns to the "house," where he smokes his cigarette and gazes out into the fog ahead, port and starboard, till dinner. He keeps this up till supper time, or till we come to an anchor. The officer of the first watch paddles around on the "house" till noon, when he is relieved by another of his style in dress and manners. After breakfast the captain quietly appears on deck again, and if tired carrying his water-proof around he goes

into the pilot house and keeps a look out there all day. He knows the country quite as well as the pilot, and he keeps the position of the vessel strictly.

Perhaps by noon, if what is called a fine day among the islands, a patch of blue about as large as a postage-stamp may be seen overhead, but the fog still presses low down on the water all around. A little later it rises in patches, but even on a very clear afternoon, with the sun visible in the western sky, patches of fog will be found roosting in the tree tops where they remain all day, and all night it may be, for at dark they still hang around as if loth to go up into the cold air of the mountain summits. Yet do not think that because the sun comes out the rain is over. That makes no difference whatever. The rain goes on and attends to its business all the same. With the sun shining the rain filters down by fits and starts in a desultory way, like a sprinkling-cart that runs itself out and then goes back to the hydrant for another supply. This is particularly fine weather for this region.

When the fog does rise, and the clouds break away in circumscribed localities, the rugged mountain tops thrust themselves up as if they had rent the sky. On the British Columbian

Islands above the Gulf of Georgia, snow-covered peaks rise from one thousand to six thousand feet, almost perpendicularly above the water. Their tops are covered with snow, but for two or three thousand feet from the base they are adorned with thick-growing spruce. With mixed weather and scenery the prospect is always charming, presenting an endless panorama. Still, the great feature of the country is water, above and below.

On the day of our departure from Nanaimo, we sail through fog and mist and rain, up to the head of the Gulf of Georgia, and thence into Discovery Passage. About six miles from the entrance to Discovery Passage we come by a short turn to Seymour's Narrows. Here the tide is forced through a narrow, winding channel at from four to six knots an hour. There are foaming swirls over the face of the rocks, and great eddies caused by meeting currents. The Narrows are not more than a pistol shot across, and a deviation of a quarter of a point from the true channel sends a ship to destruction. Here the contending currents take a vessel by the nose and swing her from port to starboard, and from starboard to port, as a terrier shakes a rat. It may be doubted if the Argonautic expedition experienced greater perils

than are to be met in Seymour Narrows, at the mouth of which the bones of the United States ship Saranac lie bleaching fathoms down.

Having safely made our exit from the Narrows, we continue on through smooth waters, with comparatively easy curves, till we reach Johnstone Straits, when once more we go winding away among pretty coves, and at the foot of high mountains, covered with an inexhaustible crop of firs and spruce which, high up, look like green velvet; but the sailing is safe, for a hundred fathoms of line will not permit the lead to touch bottom here. It has the appearance of a broad, smooth river, winding its way sleepily between high mountains and steep, rocky cliffs.

The canoes, or "dug-outs," in the northwestern waters are as large, sometimes as graceful and possibly swifter, than Cleopatra's barge. The natives travel in them for weeks up and down these inland seas and salty currents to trading posts, carrying their furs for barter. They take their families at times, as a Pennsylvania farmer takes his wife and daughters and stalwart sons in his Conestoga wagon to York or Reading.

These canoe cruisers paddle or sail all day with the tide, and go into camp wherever they

please, resuming their journey on the next flood. They fish as they go, and find fresh water running down the mountain sides from the snow reservoirs above. What ponies and the trails of the mountains and valleys are to the Indians of the Plains, canoes and inland passages among the islands are to the natives of British Columbia and Alaska.

One evening, just after the "Rush" turned a short bend in Johnstone Straits, a large canoe was sighted off the port bow. She was moving slowly along and contained several persons. As the wind was pretty stiff, and the set of the tide uncertain, the captain told "Mike," our pilot, that he might bear up a trifle so as to speak the canoe. As soon as the movement became apparent to the natives, all hands began to paddle with collegiate energy, and the "dug-out" spurted for shore as if with a determination to scramble to the top of the mountain. "Mike," who was long since a trader in these waters, at once asserted with all confidence that the canoe had whiskey aboard, and as whiskey is contraband among the Indians of British Columbia, the paddlers were fleeing to avoid confiscation. As the "Rush" had no jurisdiction in British waters there was no effort to overhaul the "dug-out," and as soon as its occupants

found the chase abandoned, they rested their paddles and waved farewell salutes with their hats. Occasionally, as often as a dozen times in a hundred miles, smoke may be seen rising from among the trees in British Columbia along the inland passage. Solitary cabins of such white men as take Indian wives and who are content to live by hunting and fishing, occur at unfrequent intervals, and still farther apart are Indian villages of wooden houses. Game is said to be abundant in the hills, and fish are plentiful in the waters. With canoes for transportation and guns and fishing tackle to secure the necessaries of life, these people subsist in contentment. The cold is not severe, and the natural dampness produced by continuous rain is put up with as a blessing from the clouds.

CHAPTER III.

FOLLOWING VANCOUVER'S WAKE.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S SOUND, which we cross on the way to Sitka, is a dangerous place. Here, in our very course, in 1794, Vancouver got the Discovery, his flagship, upon the rocks one day, and had no sooner, by the rising of the tide, floated her again, than the Chatham, her consort, went upon another reef farther seaward. After a day and a night of severe labor, the Chatham was released, having sustained but comparatively little damage.

Our own ships in later days have not always been so fortunate. The Suwance, double-ender, went to pieces here in 1868, though all on board were saved. But in 1873 the steamer George S. Wright struck on some rocks here, as is supposed from portions of wreck which were found scattered among the islands, and all on board were lost. She was bound from Sitka for San Francisco, and is supposed to have struck during a snow storm. Some bodies

were found east ashore with life preservers on, the wearers having evidently perished in the water.

About four years later, a Sound Indian turned up who represented that he was the sole survivor of the Wright disaster. His story was to the effect that he had been a coal-heaver on board the lost steamer, and after she struck he got into a boat along with the captain, pilot, and some soldiers. They made land and built a fire, soon after which a party of Indians appeared and were offered five hundred dollars by the captain to take the castaways to Fort Rupert, about twenty-five miles to the southward. The sole survivor went on to relate that though the Indians appeared, for a time, to entertain the proposition favorably, they finally concluded to kill the whites, which determination was carried into execution. This alleged sole survivor gave as a reason for not telling his story before, that the murderers threatened to kill his father if he told anything about it, but his conscience finally impelled him to make the revelation. It was a good story and it found many believers. The accused Indians were arrested by the British authorities, and were in a fair way to be hanged, when it was proven beyond question that the alleged sole survivor was serving a

term in the Victoria jail at the time of the Wright disaster. His motive for inventing the charge against the accused was revenge.

Crossing Queen Charlotte's Sound we enter Fitzhugh's Sound, after passing up which about a mile we come upon another interesting locality, Safety Cove, where Vancouver anchored his ships for a few days' rest and repair, after months of hardships and dangers. Safety Cove is about an eighth of a mile across at the mouth, and, maintaining nearly an equal width all the way, extends back into the mountains for a mile. The hills on either side rise precipitously to the height of at least a thousand feet, covered with a growth of spruce, pine, and cedar that is almost impenetrable. About two-thirds of the distance up the Cove, on the north side, a stream of water tumbles down the bank so conveniently that the breakers in the ship's boats may be filled without the men going ashore. It is pure, ice-cold water from the top of the snowy mountain. At the head of this cove a large stream puts in from a low opening. The Cove is as smooth and bright on the surface as a mirror, and with the framework of dark green surrounding it and the "Rush" riding in the centre, the only sign of civilization in this provincial wilderness, a lovelier picture could not

be conjured by the liveliest imagination. The sun, which did not set till eight o'clock, could not be seen in the Cove, but down across Fitzhugh's Sound he glanced his last rays from the summits of snow-capped mountains, throwing pink upon the snow and purple and crimson shades among the brown and dark green of hill and vale in richest profusion.

The men not on duty caught a plentiful supply of flounders here. Among other hands on board the "Rush" were some Japanese boys, two of whom were employed in the ward room and one in the cabin. The captain's boy was the first to haul up a wonderful fish or reptile with spotted skin, long tapering tail, and a full set of teeth like a section of an ivory comb. The fish, which had no scales, was provided with openings for gills under the pectoral fins. On the head was a curved sort of horn or clamp on a hinge, the outer end of which, concave and armed with sharp teeth or points, rested in a socket. As the cabin boy raised this horn to examine the curiosity, it took the end off his finger, and he prosecuted his scientific investigations no further.

The doctor could not identify this strange fish, which would weigh about four pounds, his authorities on ichthyology being silent on

the subject, but "Mike" says they are called "rat fish" a name that would appear to be applied in consequence of the peculiar formation of tail and teeth. The fish had prominent eyes, generally dark blue, but in some shades of light a brilliant green.

At intervals all through these inland waters may be seen Indian burial places, if "burial" is a proper word to use in this connection. The Indians of British Columbia are cremators, and the places where the ashes of their dead are deposited are remarkable for the care with which they are preserved and decorated. Indian sepulchres may be seen, sometimes one or two in a place, on a prominent headland, marked with circular boards or with cloth stretched on hoops, looking at the distance of a thousand yards, like targets. A flag is occasionally set near by as if still more strongly to attract attention.

One of the most remarkable burial places in British Columbia, on this route, is in McLaughlin's Bay at a Hudson Bay trading port called Bella Bella. Here the houses which contain the sacred ashes of the dead are numerous, and about half a dozen spots are marked and decorated as the tombs of chiefs. When we passed that point on the morning after leaving

Safety Cove, flags were flying in the cemetery as if it were Memorial Day, and it is said that these decorations are renewed as often as carried away or destroyed by the elements. There is also quite an extensive Indian village at Bella Bella.

Game would appear to be scarce hereabouts, but it must exist somewhere in the hills, for deer skins are sent out on steamers and trading vessels. From the deck of the steamer the timber on all sides of the islands, as at Safety Cove, appears too dense to offer good range for deer, yet venison is found in places. After getting in among the thousands of islands between Victoria and this point we have seen but few birds or fish. A fin back whale preceded us into Seymour's Narrows, as if cunningly enticing us to our destruction, disappearing as soon as we were so far advanced as to make return or backout impossible, and on the day after a shark skimmed the surface contentedly along side, but animal life above the surface of the waters is not plentiful.

In August 1792, Vancouver wrote of a point on the mainland in latitude fifty-two degrees, three minutes as follows: —

"This rendezvous was about thirty-seven miles from the station of the vessels (Safety Cove) in as desolate, inhospitable a country as the most melancholy creature

could be desirous of inhabiting. The eagle, crow, and raven that occasionally had borne us company in our lonely researches visited not these dreary shores. The common shell fish, such as muscles, clams, and cockles, and the nettle, samphire and other coarse vegetables that had been so highly essential to our health and maintenance in all our former excursions, were scarcely found to exist here; and the ruins of one miserable hut, near where we had lodged the preceding night, was the only indication we saw that human beings ever resorted to the country before us."

The chief attractions of the latter portion of our run one day were among mountains rising abruptly from one to four thousand feet in height, down which rush roaring cataracts from the melting snows above. Many of these streams fall down the faces of rugged granite cliffs which cut the water into fine spray and mist. In others the water spreads out in a thin, smooth sheet like a broad ribbon of white satin. Again it appears as spun glass of the finest quality. Frequently a foaming torrent tumbles over among huge boulders at the mouths of cañons so low in grade as to afford a chance for salmon to ascend. In such places fishing may be prosecuted in season with satisfactory results. The sides of the mountains in many places show deep scars, bearing silent testimony to past land slides, which, for thou-

sands of feet in length and hundreds of yards in breadth, increasing in width as they descended, had swept down the forests and stripped the thin soil from the rocks which now stand out like fleshless bones.

For purely artistic beauty, however, Granville channel exceeds anything yet seen on this cruise among the untamed beauties of nature on land and water. Imagine an avenue of clear, calm water, straight as a transit road five miles in length, a quarter of a mile across at the eastern end and running down to a tapering point closed up completely and thoroughly, as it appears by a bold mountain two thousand feet in height. The mountains on either side are equally high, all making sharp lines, green, low down with spruces, which also appear, but scatteringly, on the snow-crowned summits. The regularity of the channel so far as it is in sight, the varied lines of the mountains and the unbroken stillness, except the regular thumping of the steamer's engines, altogether form an enchanting scene. Of course when we get to the mountain at the western terminus, which we do as daylight gives way to darkness, there is a passage out, and at a quarter past nine P. M. we anchor in seventeen fathoms for the night, in Lowe's Inlet, and go to sleep to the droning

sound of the cataract on shore, into which an arrow might be shot from the deck of the steamer.

On the next morning we obtain our first view of Alaska, Cape Fox being visible for a short time. In the afternoon we let go anchor at Port Simpson, still in British Columbia.

Of the character of the country through which we had been passing for a week, no person can form any conception from ordinary maps. We had been spending days and travelling hundreds of miles among islands innumerable, and channels in every direction, narrow sometimes, so that a pistol ball might be fired across, and yet hundreds of fathoms in depth. There are thousands of passages into which we do not enter, because our object is to pursue the most direct course through the country, and, doubtless, many of them have been only superficially surveyed. Their number and magnitude in some cases, as the Straits of Fuca, Gulf of Georgia, Queen Charlotte's Sound and others, are wonderful. It seems as if the Almighty had here shattered the mountains with an omnipotent sledge for a thousand miles and turned the waters of the sea to flow among the fragments. It is a wonderful country to look at, and if situated so as to be available for Sunday excur-

sions from a great city or a number of great cities, it might be put to some profitable use. For any other purpose it has very few, if any recommendations at present. The timber grows on a thin, skinny soil at best, and often only holds on by roots in crevices of the rocks. The climate is wet, cold, and cheerless, and vegetation, though it may grow, does not mature. Even the greater portion of the timber seems to die young. The country has attractions for the artist and possibly for the scientist, but it will probably remain in possession of the Indians for many generations, if not for all time. Justice would now seem to require that the Indians should be permitted to remain in undisturbed possession of these islands of British Columbia. Of course, if valuable mineral or other products should be discovered here that would be quite a different thing.

Port Simpson is a Hudson Bay trading post where steamers plying between Victoria and Wrangel or Sitka sometimes touch. There is no post-office here, and letters are only forwarded as uncertain opportunities permit. It is like many another settlement which we have seen during the past week. One of the most remarkable of these is Duncan's Mission at Metlahcatlah in Chatham's Sound, about fifteen miles from Port Simpson.

In 1858 Duncan was sent to Port Simpson as a missionary, and soon afterward, having some disagreement with the Hudson Bay Company's agent at that place, he moved down to Metlahcatlah, intending to take all of the Indians with him, but the company brought Rev. Mr. Crosby out and saved about half of them. Duncan, however, built up a settlement and prospered in more ways than one. He has a snug town in which there is a church, a seminary, a jail, and a great many adjuncts of civilization, if not all the modern improvements. He is a magistrate, and has Indian constables to execute his warrants and enforce his decrees. He will not tolerate whiskey or outside traders within his jurisdiction, but does some outside trading himself. It is reported that he gets the better of Uncle Sam to the extent of twenty thousand dollars or thirty thousand dollars a year by sending his Indians with goods up some of the inland passages to trade with the Alaskan natives, by which smuggling our revenues are made to suffer. At all events, whether true or false, Duncan has the reputation of being a prosperous and successful missionary.

"Mike," our pilot, attempted to land some whiskey at Metlahcatlah some years ago, before he experienced a change, but he says Duncan's

police ran him out. Possibly if he could have got ashore there with enough whiskey to run the place for three days, the mission might have been wiped out and Duncan would have been, before this, seeking proselytes among nations further removed from the refining influence of civilization, or in some secret nook unknown to the alcoholic corsair of the western isles. As it is, both "Mike" and Duncan are now good citizens, and if the missionary is the richer in this world's goods the pilot is an inexhaustible mine of interesting reminiscences of contraband cruisings before he experienced a change.

Port Simpson was established by the Hudson Bay Company in 1829, and has seen many wars with the native tribes, but it still lives—an important post of the company. It is now a general rendezvous for various tribes, but is located on the lands of the Tongass. The objects of greatest interest here at the present time are "potlatch" poles, which average about twenty feet in height, and are carved near the base in grotesque figures of monsters bearing columns upon their heads. Some of the columns have the figures of beasts set vertically on top, but the prevailing idea is of monstrous faces carved below. These have an idolatrous

air about them, and are not in favor with Mr. Crosby, the missionary, who is having them removed as fast as possible. In a short time they will all have disappeared and carried with them whatever of traditional meaning they may have for the Aborigines, who will also disappear in a few generations, or would under American influences. It is the policy of the Hudson Bay Company, however, to preserve the Indian, for on his labors that corporation thrives.

CHAPTER IV.

CANOES AND CARVED POLES.

THE first anchorage made by the "Rush" in Alaskan waters, on this cruise, was in Karta or Kassan Bay, before the village of the Indian Chief Scowl, on Prince of Wales Island. This is one of the most interesting Indian villages on this coast for several reasons, most prominent of which are that Scowl is chief of all the Hyda Indians, headquarters of the tribe being on Prince of Wales, and his village contains the most extensive and elaborately carved poles, of which brief mention was made in the preceding chapter.

Old Scowl is now totally blind and nearly deaf, but he appears to be the remains of a once physically powerful man, and he long wielded unquestioned authority in his widely extended tribe. The Hydas are great hunters and fishers, and at the time of our visit the chief village was almost deserted, the inhabitants being away seal hunting out beyond Queen Charlotte's Island.

These Indians of the Northwest coast differ as much in appearance as in customs from those of the plains. The buffalo eaters are a hardy race of strong, muscular men, with the piercing eyes, high cheek-bones, and aquiline noses of a warlike people. The Hydas, Tsimpsiens, Tongass, and others of this region, from Puget Sound to Sitka, have round, fat faces with dull expression, indicative of anything but bravery and ambition. The Sioux live principally on buffalo meat, and take an abundance of rough exercise on horseback over mountain and plain. The Hydas and their kind paddle or drift around with the tides in canoes, live on fish, and become oily and lazy looking. The habits and diet of both classes reveal themselves in form and face, the meat eaters being tall and lean, as a rule, the fish eaters fat and squatty.

The canoe is the sole means of locomotion here. All the "trails" are by water, and the canoes of this people are wonderful specimens of savage naval architecture. The Hydas make the best and largest canoes in this section of the coast. At Port Simpson "dug-outs," from forty to fifty feet in length, are quite common, and some are much longer. One taken to the Centennial was eighty feet in length and so deep that men sitting in it were concealed from

view up to their shoulders. The canoes are dug and burned out, each being constructed of a cedar log, which, after the excavation, is spread open till thoroughly dried in that position. They are all constructed on one model, being a simple curve at the stern, the prow sticking sharply from the water and projecting upward and outward in a graceful form, after the style of ancient Roman and Grecian war galleys as we see them pictured in books.

With ten, fifteen, twenty or forty paddles on a side (the Centennial canoe carried the latter number when fully manned), these "dug-outs" are propelled through the water at a rate equal to two miles for any ship boat's one. Port Simpson is headquarters for the canoe trade, whole fleets being brought in at times for sale as at fairs or markets in great commercial cities. At times a fleet of new "dug-outs" go paddling into the harbor where they are to be sold, in the form of a great crescent within the bay, and are brought to the beach amid chanting and shouting and general demonstrations, intended to give importance to the occasion.

These sales attract Indians from the surrounding country to Port Simpson where considerable property changes hands in consequence, some canoes selling as high as $100 in blankets and

other commodities. They represent a vast amount of patient labor, and skill, to a certain extent. They are swift, graceful, and buoyant, but are liable to split by the force of a blow or under a severe strain.

A few years ago, Mr. Williamson, who was at that time agent for the Hudson Bay Company, at Port Simpson, went over to Queen Charlotte's Island, about forty miles distant, making the outward voyage in safety. In returning, however, he experienced heavy weather. His crew consisted of five Indians, and when about ten miles out they turned and attempted to go back to the island. The sea became rougher with each blast of the gale, and finally, growing desperate, the voyagers hoisted sail and concluded to try to run in as soon as possible, delay seeming to make their situation more perilous each instant. While thus buffeting the waves the canoe split from stem to stern, and, of course, all of its occupants were thrown into the sea.

Even under these circumstances, while being buffeted by tremendous billows, the Indians succeeded in passing some kelp cordage around the wreck, and thus formed a raft which held all up. The cold, however, was so severe, with the drenching water, that Mr. Williamson

soon succumbed, and laying off his hat, offered a short prayer and slid into the sea. One by one the crew departed in a similar manner, except a solitary Indian, who, after four days, reached shore in a famishing condition.

Yet the Indians on the coast venture out thirty to forty miles from land in their canoes when hunting the fur seal, which, when traveling north, keeps well out to sea.

At Karta, "potlatch" poles from a foot to four feet in diameter at the base, and from fifteen to sixty and even seventy-five feet in height, have been erected to commemorate one or another important event in the history of a family. At Port Simpson a pole with a carved figure of a wolf, life size, on top and a veritable gun strapped near the effigy, was erected in memory of a hunter who perished while in the mountains on one of his expeditions, during a severe snow-storm. Other poles commemorate similar events; but the greater number represent quite another sort of affair which I believe is peculiar to the Indians of this coast.

It is, or was, the custom among the Hydas, on the occasion of the erection of a new house, and all here, as at Port Simpson, live in wooden buildings, to give what might be called a "warming." Upon taking possession of the new

premises the proprietor celebrates the event by a "potlatch" feast (Chinook word for gift), and a carved pole is erected to mark the event. One of the greatest things a Hyda can do is to give away more than his neighbors. The gifts consist principally of blankets, which are distributed by the hundred when they can be obtained, and it is not uncommon for these Indians to bestow all of their worldly goods in that manner, leaving them poor forever afterward. For carving the poles twenty, thirty, and as high as fifty blankets, worth about two dollars each, have been paid.

Rank and title among these Indians descend not in a line from father to son, but from uncle to nephew, a system of nepotism calculated to secure rotation in office. In order that a nephew may succeed to the honors and dignities of the mother's brother he must, on taking his place at the head of the tribe, or family, distribute or pay to his uncle's surviving relatives goods of a value equal to those given on the occasion of the erection of the family tree. Any young man of spirit would naturally be urged and stimulated for the accomplishment of this purpose to put forth every exertion to obtain the amount of wealth necessary to secure his title. And this has led, in late years, to the

adoption of means, not creditable to the Hyda man nor elevating to the woman over whom he exercised complete control. It was with a view of putting a stop to these demoralizing practices that the missionaries have discouraged the erection and preservation of the "potlatch" poles. If the heir apparent fails to distribute a sufficient quantity of goods to entitle him to take rank as the head of the family, some other member, more successful, or more ambitious, may produce the blankets and walk off with the honors.

At Port Simpson and at Metlahcatlah the missionaries have effected encouraging results and achieved considerable success among the Indians, but old Scowl, chief of the Hydas, frowns down all preachers who approach his possessions. Two preachers attempted to make a beginning among the Hydas a few years ago, but they were politely informed that if they did not go away they would be killed. They did not remain. Consequently Scowl's people not only retain their "potlatch" poles, but they enjoy some other privileges which no conscientious missionary could approve, and at least one of which is not in harmony with the spirit of our laws since the war.

The Hydas own slaves, and have owned

them since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. The original stock of slaves generally consisted of children captured in warfare, whose posterity remained in a condition of bondage. Slaves have been sold by these more northern tribes to the Indians of Puget Sound, and the power over such chattels has been so complete that they have been killed out of compliment to or regard for a dying master, and the women have been leased out for evil purposes. Old Scowl has slaves now, and, as he is believed to be on his last legs, the wisest thing they could do would be to emigrate to the land of the free, farther east.

When a Hyda chief dies it is supposed he will need servants in the felicitous fishing fields, and that the best way to secure them is to take them with him. The records of the Hudson Bay Company at Port Simpson show, that in 1842 on one occasion the agent visited a dying man of some note and entered the place where he lay just in time to find him engaged in an attempt to strangle his nephew. The agent rescued the boy and took him into the post, where he was kept till after the departure of the spirit of his kingly uncle. Then came the mother of the lad and demanded compensation of the company for the annoyance and incon-

venience to which her departed brother would be put in the other world, by reason of not having the spirit of her son servilely attendant upon his ghostly majesty. The company paid for that interference in family affairs.

Rude as these people may be considered by persons of artificial culture, it must be said in their favor that all men have a commercial value in their eyes, and accidental insurance is one of the things that they believe in. If one or twenty of these Indians are hired for labor they must be returned or paid for, some costing as much as one hundred dollars. Many years ago, when the Russians were in possession of Alaska, a Frenchman came out to open up the fur trade and add to the commercial importance of his brilliant nation. He hired a lot of Sitka Indians to hunt seals and moved down about Queen Charlotte's to commence operations. He put his Indians ashore there, where twenty-three of them were killed by the Hydas and nine in another place. When he returned to Sitka he paid two hundred dollars apiece for the missing Indians, according to contract, and had a grand total of sixty-three sealskins worth about five dollars each as the result of his cruise. Then he sailed for La Belle France with rather a poor opinion of the country.

The women of these tribes have their foibles, as other women have, and as they differ somewhat from what appears farther east and southward, it may be well to mention some items. They do not parade to any great extent in sealskin sacques or other fine fur, a fact which may be due, at least in part, to early teachings. The Hudson Bay Company, which first introduced manners, things, and ideas of civilization among these Indians, forbade their employés wearing furs under any circumstances, as it was found if they made use of such articles in their wearing apparel the Indians would imitate them, and good furs would thus be wasted as it were, and there would be nothing in the country worth trading for. And now calico and blankets are more worn by Hyda women than furs.

What they lack in skins, however, they make up in jewelry. They wear rings upon their fingers, in their ears, and in their noses. But they have another sort of ornament which is peculiar to the squaws on this coast. On arriving at the age of womanhood they pierce the lower lip, through which they thrust a piece of ivory or a silver pin about an inch long and as thick as a knitting needle. Inside the mouth the end of the pin is fastened to a plate which

rests before the gum. This pin is increased in thickness as the lady advances in years, till it looks as if the entire lip had been torn out and the hole stopped by a bone. The women are industrious, as Indian women generally are, cleaning the fish, curing skins, hewing wood, and drawing water. They make a cordage of the fibre of nettles (which weed they use for "greens" also), and out of kelp, which is found floating all through these waters. Matting is made of a kind of grass, and one species of seaweed is dried in huge blocks a foot square and two to three inches in thickness, forming a staple article of food.

On the whole, the people are fat, contented, and happy, so far as can be judged from general appearances, and though ready and willing to accept anything gratuitous from tobacco to old shoes, they volunteer to give nothing; and when they sell they are the most unscrupulous of Shylocks. These are part of our purchase from Russia. Higher up we have others of a different but equally interesting character.

CHAPTER V.

WRANGEL AND SITKA.

FORT WRANGEL is situated on an island at the mouth of Stickeen river, and derives the chief part of its commercial importance from trade with miners who dig gold in British Columbia.

It is, at times, what is called a "lively" town, made so particularly when the miners come down in the fall. Then come also hundreds of squaws, who form the chief attraction for dance-houses. About eight hundred white men and three hundred Chinese had gone up to the mines. During the spring before and up to the time of our arrival, squaws were still numerous, but about three hundred of them had followed the miners. Those remaining "loafed" around the stores, the younger chewing gum in seminary style, the elders smoking black pipes.

There are a number of stores here and considerable trade is done with Indians in furs,

Whiskey is a contraband article, though plenty of liquor in bond is landed from Victoria and transferred to river steamers or canoes for the mines. Indians are said to do a considerable amount of work in and about the mines, packing goods around portages, etc.

Wrangel is also a famous place for fish of various kinds, but the most highly prized of all the fishes of the sea in this part of the world is the oolican or "candle fish," like a smelt, small, sweet, and very fat. The oil oozes from them when drying, and when dried they may be lighted and will burn like a candle. For years Indians have made pilgrimages for hundreds of miles from the interior, for the purpose of taking these fish, which run from the sea into fresh water streams during a few weeks in the spring. They are then raked out and dried or preserved in brine for future use. Formerly the oolican were taken at the mouth of the Stickeen, but some twenty years since they failed and then they could be obtained only at Nass river, near Port Simpson. Recently, however, the oolican returned in countless numbers.

Life at Wrangel, especially for a temporary sojourner, has its drawbacks. The only first-class hotel moves up to the mines during the summer, and there is no other class, conse-

quently accommodation is limited to empty, cheerless cabins, or the hospitality of friends.

To a man who has the use of his limbs and likes to exercise them, Wrangel must always appear the most objectionable of places as affording the least possible scope for locomotion. To "walk" along the beach means to hop from boulder to boulder, and a "ramble" through the woods takes the shape of climbing up one side of big logs and sliding or falling down the other, not to speak of such little difficulties as impenetrable brambles and "devil's clubs." The inhabitants of this locality may, however, console themselves with the assurance that professional pedestrianism will never reach them. The waters of the bay afford an opportunity for recreation to those who can trust themselves to skittish canoes, but there is not a "white" boat in the great seaport of Wrangel.

The chief amusement in which the visitor can indulge, is to watch the Indians as they lounge along the store fronts, or saunter leisurely through the straggling town. Blankets of every imaginable pattern and hue form the outer garment of the adults, the clothing of youths and children being more a matter of accident than choice, and now and then we meet

a young boy who has not yet been the subject of a drapery accident. The stores are generally crowded during the day, but it would be unsafe to draw any conclusions as to the state of trade from the number of Indians fringing the counters. They have a way of looking at goods for days or weeks ahead, talking the matter over with friends or in family conclave even if the coveted object is only a worsted scarf or a hat. To obtain the necessary equivalent is another consideration, involving a few days' labor at chopping or packing, or a journey to the home of some friend or creditor, and when at last the preparations are concluded, the purchase is made furtively, and often without a word being uttered by salesman or purchaser.

The arrival of large parties of Indians from distant villages always causes a stir in "business circles." The traders generally have in their employ some hangers-on who are supposed to induce Indian visitors to sell their furs according to the "runner's" recommendation, but these fellows, as a rule, are not to be relied upon. The "wild" customers know enough of business to sell only to the highest bidder. They pitch their camp at some distance from the town, and do not begin to "trade" until visits of ceremony have been

exchanged with resident Indians. Individuals walk into town, and, with one or two skins tucked away under their blanket, they make the round of the stores. One of these fellows will quietly walk up to the counter and silently deposit a silver fox or beaver skin. The clerk picks it up, shakes it, smells it, rubs it, twisting it first one way and then another, then smooths it down again on the counter with an air of cunning and shrewdness beautiful to behold. At last he utters one or two words in "Chinook," or some Indian dialect, mentioning the price. The dusky operator never accepts a first offer, but silently picks up the skin, conceals it in the folds of his blanket and stalks away. In the next store the performance is repeated, and days are often spent in this way before a bargain is concluded. It is safe to assert that each of the ten store-keepers of Wrangel handles and appraises every skin brought for sale in this way.

Different tactics are resorted to, however, when some chief arrives with a large consignment of furs, the fruit of a year's hunting and trapping by his slaves. The lucky trader who gets such a prospective prize within his doors, resorts to almost any device to detain the customer and his precious furs. Several of the

store-keepers have "private trading rooms," into which the "rich Indians" are invited and there treated to food, drink and tobacco — in some cases, it is said, also to forbidden alcoholic stimulants. The most tempting array of dry goods is spread upon the floor, together with fire-arms and ammunition: presents of finery are judiciously bestowed upon the females accompanying the chief; candy and nuts are showered upon the juveniles. If the chief has not made up his mind when evening comes, he is loaded with canned delicacies, sweet crackers, and molasses, and returns to camp to feast with his "tilicums." Perhaps the following day the bargain is concluded — the chief receiving a higher price for his furs than they would bring in Victoria or San Francisco. But how does the trader live by such transactions? That is a secret of the Wrangel "merchants" and I shall not give it away.

It is difficult to surmise what Wrangel would be without the Indians, but even the most ardent admirer of the red-men would not dare to assert that life is made more pleasant by their presence. They lumber up nearly every foot of available space, squatting, crouching, or lying at full length: they carry with them an atmosphere of unpleasant odors, and are apt to

plant themselves upon any seat within their reach with the greatest unconcern. Their clothes, unless just from the store, are grimy enough to awaken uncomfortable suspicions, and in addition to all this they are constantly masticating, during the summer months a kind of wild celery with a very strong odor. The squaws bring canoe-loads of it from the woods every morning, and by noon the stoops and side-walks are heaped with garbage, and the unpleasant scent ascends to heaven.

The natives at Fort Wrangel are all good Indians, "friendly disposed toward the whites." Our steamer was boarded by a number of them while in the harbor, bearing certificates of good character. The most noted of them is a blind old fellow with "papers" from all the officials who have been in the country, and with one from the captain of a British man-of-war dating back to 1853. The old fellow who is called Paul Jones, came on board, desirous of obtaining a berth as interpreter for a gunboat. The Indians here have a high regard for gunboats, which they believe fully competent to rule both land and water. Paul Jones averred that he had been blind for twenty-six years and that his blindness was due to sickness and thereby hangs a tale. It is said that previous to his

blindness Paul Jones was a pilot on this coast, in which profession he achieved some extraordinary successes in a certain way. He succeeded in wrecking two trading schooners by deliberately running them upon rocks for purposes of plunder. He made one more attempt in that direction, which was his last.

As the story goes, Paul Jones was engaged about twenty-six years ago, as pilot for a merchant vessel, commanded by a captain whose schooner had been once wrecked by this same good Indian. Approaching the locality of his former disaster, the captain saw, or thought he saw, the pilot attempting to run his vessel upon the rocks, which he knew too well. Seeing this the captain seized the Indian and at first proposed to kill him, but changed the decree to blindness, and, in pursuance of that determination destroyed the pilot's sight. He said Paul Jones should wreck no more vessels, and it may be assumed as correct that since the loss of his eyes he has retired from piloting, and now seeks to act as interpreter. One of his papers, however, intimated that an alleged characteristic of the interpreter was a weakness for withholding from an Indian whom he might not particularly admire any expressions of approbation which the principal might be desirous of conveying. This

is a dangerous failing in an Indian interpreter, for flattery is a powerful engine in dealing with the simple savage.

Another good Indian here had a most touching tribute from General O. O. Howard, who hoped his protégé would do all in his power to prevent the circulation of whiskey among his people. It closed with an eloquent assurance that God loves those who dwell in peace together. This lovable youth made use of his paper as an argument in favor of donations of tobacco and hard tack.

The "medicine man" of this coast is an awfully mysterious personage. His first steps in the art of healing, according to the traditions of his tribe, are taken at an extremely early day in his career. Should a child be born with curly hair, strabismical eye, or a club foot, he is accepted as a healer of the generation, and all his early training is conducted with a view to increasing his supernatural powers and control over the spirits of the air. His food is carefully selected, and many articles of everyday use among the common herd are excluded from his bill of fare. He is put in training for a doctor from his infancy, and great things are expected of him when fully developed and endowed with his degree.

The "doctor" seldom washes his person, and never cuts his hair, which latter grows long and bushy in masses, knotted from lack of combing and entangled with burrs and general rubbish, such as floats around an Indian encampment. He adorns his scanty raiment with eagle's down, and altogether presents a weird, not to say untidy, appearance.

In cases of serious illness among members of a Plain's tribe, the Medicine Man will administer sparingly some pulverized herbs and teas in considerable draughts, but the "Siwash" doctor of the northwest coast scorns all sublunary aids, whether of powders or decoctions. When a Hyda or Stickeen Indian is very sick the Siwash doctor proceeds slowly at first to agitate his attendant spirit, which is called a "Yake," and by extraordinary contortions and gymnastic exercises succeeds, in the course of half an hour, in working himself up to a perfect paroxysm of clairvoyancy, throwing off his garments as he progresses, till finally he stands arrayed in an abbreviated skirt about his loins, but is clothed chiefly in foam and perspiration. Then he is ready for business.

He now makes "passes," as the gentlemen of the "P. R." call them, toward the body of the patient, inhaling his breath noisily through his

teeth, producing some such sound as is heard in dental shops when laughing gas is administered. Having sucked the disease out of the form of the sick man, the doctor proceeds to the centre of the house and blows it up through the opening where smoke from the fire finds its exit. Of course the patient is now in a fair way to recovery. But in case of the patient not evincing any signs of improvement, the doctor finds that the "conditions are not favorable," owing to the influence of some witch who has evoked an evil spirit to operate against the recovery. In such a case it becomes the doctor's first duty to point out the witch, who is stripped, bound, and subjected to a Puritanical course of discipline, with a view to forcing a confession. The rack, the scourge, and starvation generally have the desired effect, and the witch acknowledges anything that the doctor demands. This is always gratifying, and is considered one of the greatest triumphs of the healing art; but should the confession be made too late to effect the desired cure, the witch may be killed, and often is sacrificed on general principles. Even though the patient dies under these circumstances it is still a triumph for the doctor, as killing the witch is as good proof of witchcraft in that portion of Alaska

to-day as it was in New England two hundred years ago.

The missionaries are laboring to abolish the "Siwash" school of practice, but, unfortunately, as they are themselves ignorant of allopathy, homœopathy or hydropathy, perhaps, they have nothing to offer in its place. There is an occasional M. D. at Wrangel, travelling to the "diggings" in summer, and coming down with the honest miners in the autumn, but they have little sympathy for sick Indians, upon whom they lay a tax so heavy, when called in, that their charges come to be regarded as the extortions of impostors. I heard of a doctor from the mines charging an Indian five dollars for a small box of simple salve, to be applied to a sore heel, and that style of healing is the fly in the ointment, that operates seriously against the success of the missionary who preaches against the athletic antics of the "Siwashes," who profess to cast out unclean spirits and cure Indian flesh of obstinate ailments.

If it suggests anything it is that young men who are educated as missionaries should receive regular instruction in medicine and surgery, which may be as necessary to success among savages as heavy readings in theology.

Miners come down the Stickeen in the fall

and make the town lively by increasing business generally. They patronize the dance-houses and swing corners with the dusky maidens of the forest and island, but the dissipation in these primitive halls of Terpsichore consists mainly of indulgence in apples and cigars, to which cotillon partners are treated. At the time of my visit no beer was sold here, but it has since been introduced.

When the miners are in funds they gamble also, but members of Congress are popularly credited with similar recreation as a relief to "overtaxed brains." Gambling as a pastime or profession has never yet been eradicated by law, though often prohibited with severe penalties for infraction. When the miners have money they pay for their dancing, and when they have not, toward spring, they are only taxed for the lights. Failing to get pay for the illumination, the dancing master takes his fiddle under his arm, clears the house, walks out, locks the door, goes to the mines, and Wrangel society suffers a collapse. There would appear to be nothing of a serious nature about that.

It is true a man was killed here during the winter of 1878–9, but the shooter was tried by a jury of twelve men selected by himself. The court was presided over by three judges of

equal jurisdiction, responsible business men of the place, and the murderer was regularly hanged on a regularly constructed scaffold. He had, or might have had, the benefit of clergy, and I believe some of the ladies sent him bouquets and sweetmeats while he was awaiting execution, which is all that could have been done for him in Boston or Philadelphia.

There was no other disturbance of a serious character at Wrangel, except a slight row between the resident Indians and some of the visiting tribes, but the Indians can and always will settle their own affairs, if given a chance. They settled that, and though the Hydas thought they ought to have a gunboat to blow the Stickeens into smithereens, they got along without it and nobody was killed.

On the whole it appears that the people at Wrangel were able to take care of themselves, and as they had no taxes to pay they thought they could get along without a Government imported from the East. They have no corporate system of water works, nor any paved streets; neither have they a bonded debt. There may be plenty of work here for missionaries, but there is no lack of missionaries willing to do it. There is room for moral improvement possible, but such a condition of

affairs is not confined exclusively to Wrangel Island.

If the people of Wrangel were suffering for government at the time of our visit, they did not seem to be aware of it. The permanent white population of this place was seventy-five persons. Indians, and transitory miners, and Chinese far outnumber them but do not count as population.

CHAPTER VI.

SITKA AND KADIAK.

THE situation at Sitka was not greatly different from that at Wrangel as to character of country and people, but there were fewer people at Sitka. It is less than a day's run for the steamer from the one place to the other. In good old Russian times Sitka was the capital of Alaska. It was occupied by a garrison of some three hundred men who were well provided with such munitions of war as were then regarded the most approved machines for murder. In those halcyon days, say before the Mexican war, Sitka was a real metropolis and the most important maritime town on the western coast of America north of Mexico. The "castle" which was once the residence of the Governor-General still stands high upon a mound overlooking the settlement and the beautiful bay. But the garrison is gone; the shipbuilding has ceased; the martial music is silent; more than three-fourths of the houses are vacant; the Stockade has been contemptuously

carried away by Indians for fuel, and the place had altogether a deserted and discouraging aspect. Still the few whites here talk of mines and great things in future for Sitka. It must be mines, if anything, that will create a future for this reminiscence of a settlement. At the time of our visit there were about seventy-five whites, men, women, and children, of all nationalities here. Outside the line of the old Stockade there were about a thousand Indians. In the harbor was a sloop-of-war to keep the peace.

Sitka is situated upon a swampy island having the sunless, very wet climate common to this coast above California and much worse in Alaska than in Oregon and Washington Territory, where the climate does admit of some farming. But no man should come to Sitka to look for farming lands or climate. And on all this coast there is not a more cheerless looking place than Sitka.

When Dr. LeMoyne celebrated the completion of his crematory by the incineration of the remains of the eccentric Baron Von Palm, the whole country was in a state of perspiration for days over the event, and representatives of the press from Philadelphia and New York were sent out to Washington, Pennsylvania, to report the wonderful ceremony. Here it is

different. Cremation is as common as death itself among the Indians.

We were hardly at anchor in the harbor at Sitka before we were informed that a body was to be barbecued, and immediately after breakfast I went ashore to see something of the ceremony. The funeral pyre consisted of a crib of dried logs, each about six inches in diameter and six feet in length, arranged four at the ends and three upon each side, supported by green stakes.

The arrangements were very simple. The body of a squaw, who had died on Sunday (this was on Wednesday), was hoisted out of the smoke-hole in the center of the house. Dead bodies are never permitted to go out through the doorway, among these Indians. If they were taken out that way, the spirits would be almost certain to return to plague their surviving relatives. The body in question was wrapped in a common bark mat, such as these Indians make, and laid in the crib, the top being covered with logs laid crosswise. The fire was then started and the mourners, who consisted of female relatives, sat around upon the ground to the windward and slightly to the right of the burning pile. Their hair had been cut short, their faces were all blackened, and as

the tears from their weeping eyes cut channels through the lampblack, the effect was exceedingly touching. The squaws, who numbered fifteen or twenty, sobbed, sniffled, and whined with every evidence of genuine grief. To the left of the women a number of male relatives of the deceased put in the time chanting continually and keeping time with staves about five feet long, with which they rapped pieces of boards. The men stood erect all this time and were led in the chant by an old man who held a crow totem in one hand, which being shaken, produced a rattling noise, by pebbles within the hollow instrument.

The ceremony continued for about three hours and a half, when the remains were consumed, with the exception of some of the larger leg and arm bones and a portion of the skull. As soon as the residuum was cool enough to be taken up, the mass, along with some of the wood ashes, was placed in a box, which was deposited in a sort of small hen-coop on stakes, scores of which dot the hill behind the village.

After the cremation the tired Indians turned in and slept during the afternoon, and at night had their customary dance in honor of the successful issue of the enterprise.

CHAPTER VII.

KADIAK.

SO far as mere extent of territory is concerned it must be admitted that in the purchase of Alaska we got enough land, or water and rocks, for the money. Our property in this region commences at Cape Fox as the southeastern extremity, about 50° 42′ north latitude and 130° west from Greenwich. From this point a strip of ten marine leagues in width along the coast extends northward to Mount St. Elias, and thence due north to the Arctic Ocean. Along the coast of the southeastern portion a number of islands form many inland passages similar to those on the coast of British Columbia. The southern portion of Alaska is split about the sixtieth parallel, leaving the mainland to continue southward to the line of British Columbia, while to the westward extends the peninsula, which terminates in longitude 160° 20′ west. Then commences the Aleutian Archipelago, forming a chain of islands

with narrow passages between, bending around to the southward and westward, reaching to Attou, 187° 40′ west, or 172° 20′ east from Greenwich. Thus it will be seen our most westerly Alaskan settlement is in the eastern hemisphere—nearer to London by a western than by an eastern course.

From Cape Fox—the southeastern extremity of Alaska—to Attou, is thirty-five and one-half degrees, or about nineteen hundred miles. A line drawn from Attou through the middle of Behring Straits will pass between the Diomed Islands at a distance of about one thousand miles from Attou. From there we may claim northward till stopped by polar ice. This is an extensive territory, taking in the water, but even of land there are five hundred and sixty-one thousand square miles; and if the land, which is mostly set up on end, so far as it is known, were flattened down, there would be a great deal more. But probably there is enough of it now, such as it is.

The mountains of Kadiak rise into view at fifty miles distance from the harbor, presenting an exceedingly rugged and picturesque appearance. The foreground is barren and cold looking, with sharp ridges and peaks of snow in the rear. As we approach, forests of scraggy

spruce become visible, and we are told to take a good look at them, because we will see no timber to the west and north. Kadiak is an island a hundred miles or more in length and averaging, perhaps, forty miles in width, being separated from the mainland by the Straits of Shelikoo. Kadiak and adjacent islands contain a population of upwards of two thousand souls, many of them being Russians and of mixed blood. The great majority of the people, however, are Innuits, who live principally on fish, which is here the staple article of food, as bread is in some communities. The settlement of Kadiak — or St. Paul's, as it is put down on some of the charts — contains a church (Russo-Greek), the stores of two trading companies, a custom-house, the remains of a United States garrison, and quite a village of houses in which the natives reside.

The Russians made an attempt to have their headquarters at Kadiak, being a central point, and in many respects quite advantageous; but a better harbor was found at Sitka, five hundred and fifty miles to the eastward. At present Kadiak derives its chief importance from the fur-traders' stations here, forming the headquarters of a considerable traffic up Cook's Inlet. Another industry, formerly of import-

ance here, was the cutting and storing of ice for the use of San Francisco, which trade has been suspended by the manufacture of artificial ice in the California metropolis. The American-Russian Ice Company still puts up a large supply of ice every year, permitting it to melt away at the close of the season, so as to furnish work for the natives during the winter months. It is understood that the San Francisco Artificial Ice Company have some benevolent arrangement with the Kadiak concern by which the market is not disturbed; but, in the event of any trouble with the San Francisco Company, Kadiak ice could be sent down from here.

Kadiak is considered a specially favored spot in Alaska because it produces timber and a good quality of grass. More cattle are found here than in any other portion of Alaska, though hay must be provided for their support during four months of the year. Native potatoes also thrive here, and these, with fish, which are remarkably abundant, and the fur trade, make it one of the most important settlements in the Territory. As an agricultural and pastural country Kadiak has no equal along the coast of Alaska. There may be fifty head of cattle on the island, and as many more on Woody

Island, across the harbor, where the ice company has its head quarters. Here is found the agent who hires the people to cut ice, to run his saw-mill, to build his boats, and to care for his horses. He buys their furs, furnishes them with such store goods as they need, administers medicines when they are sick, and has a general supervision of the colony except in the matter of religion, which he leaves them to enjoy according to their education. For himself he enjoys life. He sails, he hunts, he rides, walks, and takes all sorts of athletic exercises, and has sport of all kinds that can be had in a country like this, prolific in game and free from political and other restrictions. His house is well furnished, his table luxuriously supplied, he has no taxes to pay, no elections to trouble him or his people, no police, nor any use for them.

One of the institutions of Kadiak is the "galanka." This is an upright furnace made of brick, the best and most economical heater that has ever been tried, so the people say out this way, and they all agree on this point. It is a series of connecting flues which retain the heat for twenty-four hours after the small amount of wood used has been consumed. Out in this country there is nothing to compare with the galanka as a house-warmer.

The commercial importance of Kadiak at present consists of its fur trade drawn from the surrounding country, principally from Cook's Inlet. This will probably diminish, but there seem to be other resources here which, in the course of time, may develop into something of value. The waters hereabouts are plentifully supplied with fish, — cod, salmon, and herring being caught in any quantity required. There is a cannery at Karlook where excellent salmon are preserved. There is considerable spruce timber suitable for the construction of small vessels, and the natives are apt at mechanical employments, labor being cheap, so that there seems to be no reason why fishing could not be made an important industry at Kadiak. The agricultural resources of the island are considered superior — for Alaska, but they must be rated exceedingly limited in fact. Here, as about Wrangel and Sitka, there are morasses on the tops of the hills. Snow lingers on the mountains all summer, melting just fast enough to keep the whole island saturated with ice water, and ice water is not generally considered a valuable adjunct to fancy gardening, or even to profitable farming. Along the coast, adjacent to the beach, are the dryest and warmest spots of soil. In these places small native potatoes and other hardy vegetables will grow. The native

potatoes are very good, but exceedingly small. They bear about the same relation to the best varieties of potatoes that Texas cattle do to shorthorns. In all the little gardening to be seen at Sitka and Kadiak, success depends on making narrow, raised beds sloping southward, so that they may be kept as warm and dry as possible on the surface.

Wild cranberries grow plentifully on Kadiak, and, though they are of fine flavor, they are small and probably could not be shipped with profit. Furs and fish are the most valuable of its products at present. The furs consist of sea and land otter, marten, mink, lynx, wolverine, and fox, including red, cross, black, and silver-gray. Mink and beaver are low-priced furs, but a great many go in with the others. One of the companies had just got in the spring shipments of furs a short time before our arrival at Kadiak, and, hanging on the loft of the warehouses, they made a display which would be an object of great public interest if on exhibition in any large city of the "States." The variety and richness of grades and shades were bewildering. In addition to what these companies obtain, the Wood Island trader buys all of the best that are offered him. Altogether the three houses ship perhaps one hundred thousand dollars worth of furs from Kadiak annually.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHUMAGIN ISLANDS.

LEAVING Kadiak we steam westward to Unga, one of the Shumagin group of islands lying south of the peninsula of Alaska. Coasting along for two days, land is almost constantly within sight—rough, barren-looking mountains. The "Rush" lost considerable time in deep-sea soundings between Kadiak and Unga, and in making observations of prominent points. The deep-sea soundings did not develop much, but the observations resulted in establishing the fact that the coast-survey charts are considerably "out" in the positions of many headlands.

Unga is the chief of the Shumagin group and is the centre of considerable cod-fishing. A number of small schooners are up here independently, and a California company has a station on Popoff Island, twelve miles distant from Delaroff, the harbor and settlement of Unga Island. At that station, which is called

Pirate Cove, the fish are salted and packed for shipment to San Francisco, where they are dried. A number of small vessels trade among these islands for furs. The leading variety is sea otter, a great many of which are taken hereabouts, though Belkoosky, on the mainland, is head centre for these skins. Still Unga is much resorted to for furs, as the numerous rocks about the islands are frequented by the otter, which is very valuable.

The sea otter is said to be the shyest of animals and most sensitive to the presence of man or any — to them — unfamiliar odor. Hunters will remain for months on a rock in the coldest and wettest of winters without a fire or any means of warming their food or sleeping-places, waiting and watching for their prey. They endure the most severe sufferings, and they have their rewards in skins which bring them from thirty to sixty dollars each. But such privations as the hunters undergo shorten their lives, and what might be needed to complete first-class cases of consumption is found in the "barabaras," — sod huts in which they live, half underground, almost entirely in the dark, and quite without ventilation. Consumption is the great agent of death among the Aleuts, as among the Alaskan Indians, while rheumatism

is the acute disease that racks their bodies with sharp pains through life.

The Shumagin Islands, like other points visited by the "Rush" in Alaska, possess the undesirable peculiarity of being scant in soil in moderately dry spots, while the tops of hills are swamps, cold and unfathomable. What at a short distance looks like an attractive range of rolling hills proves on close inspection to be only a morass in which a sheep would be lost unless provided with a cork jacket. Why white men should leave the United States and settle down in such an inhospitable region as this is almost incomprehensible, except on the theory that they have had a rough experience in their past lives, or have retired for some good reason from localities which once knew them, but which know them no more.

Yet here are half a dozen of them, and until recently they labored under disadvantages which the natives were not obliged to encounter, for all, except natives, were forbidden to hunt. This order was issued with a view of preventing outsiders from crowding in here to destroy the sea otter, and thus leave the natives without means of earning a livelihood. The rule has recently been modified by the Secretary of the Treasury, who sent out circulars announcing that white

men married to native women would be considered natives in regard to privileges of hunting, which is consoling to the men, who get their citizenship in this manner, though they always hunted.

Steering around among the Shumagins by tortuous courses, and avoiding the jagged rocks, which stand in skirmish line deployed from the snow-covered mountains, we come to Belkoosky, an Aleutian settlement upon a point of the peninsula, and almost, if not quite, the head centre of the sea-otter hunting. Sea otters are found among the rocks, and rocks stick out of the water here in every direction. Belkoosky is exposed to southeast gales, but the settlement was not established as a pleasure resort. If it had been, it might have been placed on an arm of Belkoosky Bay, which is as smooth as a mill-dam. But Belkoosky Bay in that part freezes over, and the ice would prevent "bidarkies" putting out with the seal hunters, while from the present exposed position of the place the sea is open to the hunters at all times. When people live by the sea this is an advantage.

The Belkoosky settlement consists mainly of Aleuts, all members of the Greek church. They live much as the people do at Unga, paying no

attention to agriculture, for which their country is but poorly adapted, and looking to the sea for the necessaries of life. They live in harmony — barring family squabbles — and they do not ask for national interference. All they seem to want is to be let alone. Onalaska, Atka, Attou, — all of the Aleutian settlements, — are similarly situated in regard to government and politics. They have none, and they do not seem to want any.

CHAPTER IX.

ONALASKA'S SHORE.

ONALASKA is the chief settlement of the Aleutian Archipelago. Vessels from here cruise among the islands to eastward and westward, bringing in the sea-otter, fox, and other furs. At the time of our arrival one warehouse contained one thousand two hundred sea-otter skins, worth here at that time about forty dollars each. Before these were shipped the number swelled to three thousand, worth in London some two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. This will represent, perhaps, two-thirds of all the sea-otter skins furnished to the world annually; for comparatively few go from any other quarter. The sea otter has a fine, close fur, but it is used principally for trimming, being too heavy and too expensive for full garments. The fur-seal is much more desirable for cloaks and not so costly. In addition to sea otter, black, silver-gray, cross, and red foxes, and other land furs, mainly from Bristol Bay, centre here for shipment to San Francisco, and when

hanging in the warehouses make a grand display. Two fur companies had head quarters here for operations east, west, and northward.

Like all other Aleut settlements of any consequence, Onalaska has a Russian church; but here the priest, Father Shiesnekoo, enjoys a degree of confidence, respect, and influence not possessed by all of the gown in Aleutia. Some of the priests in Alaska are not much thought of. It was reported that a number of them, along with some from San Francisco, were to be sent to Siberia, and, though there may have been grounds for the supposition that they ought to go, none went. It may not be generally known that the Russian government pays the salaries of the Greek priests in America, — over one hundred thousand rubles per annum being sent by the Czar to the San Francisco Consistory.

The Aleuts are all members of the Greek faith. The forms and ceremonies of this church are better suited to their simple minds than those of any other Christian denomination. It is full of mysteries, and that is what they want to make religion palatable. They would not respect a doctrine that they could understand. Until they shall have been further advanced intellectually, nothing but the incomprehensible will satisfy their spiritual longings.

The members of the Russian church do not sit within their houses of worship. The vestibule of each of these churches opens into a gorgeous rotunda, decorated with religious pictures, furnished with immense silver-plated chandeliers, having sconces for a dozen candles each. Candelabræ, with many lights, stand upon a raised dais and reach as high as a man's head. In the centre, facing you as you stand with your back to the entrance, is a lattice door, on the inner side of which is a curtain concealing whatever may be within. As you enter, the congregation stands facing the screen, but back from the rotunda. The men stand upon the right, the women on the left. The singers consist of men and boys led by the second priest. In Sitka the choir had a position behind a screen to the right of the rotunda. Here in Onalaska they occupy a narrow gallery, where there is also a bench for visitors.

There may be no priest in sight, but the singing in a monotonous half-chant continues at all times when the priest is not reading or praying. Presently the curtain in the centre is drawn back, an altar within the *sanctum sanctorum* is revealed, and a priest in gorgeous vestments and wearing a tall, bell-crowned, blue-velvet hat,

is seen reading, praying, or swinging a censer. The attendant who waits upon him kisses his hand with each article given him, and crosses himself as he passes the altar. The curtain is drawn again and the holy of holies is once more concealed from view.

After another short interval the priest comes out into the rotunda by a side door, and walks around to the centre, carrying a chalice or some other portion of the communion service. As he appears, the people to right and left fall to bending and crossing themselves as rapidly as possible. The youngsters especially, who are kept in front, toward the rotunda, bend like growing grain in a summer's gale, and cross themselves as if troubled by mosquitoes. Hands fly from forehead to breast, and from shoulder to shoulder, while the body bends and sways, and occasionally a forehead touches the floor, the devout worshipper being down on hands and knees.

The priest walks slowly around toward the raised platform in the centre and disappears in the inner room, which is elevated a foot or two above the rotunda. The latticed doors meet behind him, and, as the chalice is placed upon the little altar, the curtain again shuts out the view from the congregation, who stand with

bowed heads mentally repeating prayers, as would appear from their frequent crossings. Now the mysteries of transubstantiation are taking place. Shortly the curtain is again thrown back, the priest walks out with a silver chalice and spoon, takes position on the lower step of the dais, and a number of women, with children in their arms, step forward one at a time. The youngsters are from a few months to two years of age, and as they are held up the priest takes a small portion of the contents of the chalice in the spoon and inserts it in the child's mouth. The forehead of the child is touched with the chalice, and the ceremony of communion is completed.

Altogether the service is such as could not fail to make a profound impression on the minds of humble people like the Aleuts: and as they stand bowing and crossing themselves, or touching their foreheads to the floor, the youngest girls, with small colored shawls, worsted scarfs, or bright handkerchiefs over their heads and about their full olive faces, the young ladies in hats somewhat gay with blue and white ribbons and feathers, the older women in headgear of a more subdued character, the effect is exceedingly picturesque. As to religion, it is with these people a matter of faith, pure and

unadulterated. It is the priest's business to conduct them to heaven. All they have to do is what they are told, and this they appear to do in great earnestness, at least in form.

The Russians had the advantage over others in dealing with these people, which is the result of both using the same language and of long domination, which completely subjected them to the will of what they for generations felt be a superior race backed by unlimited power. The children got some exceedingly primitive rudiments of book knowledge in the Russian language, but not enough to hurt them with all the proverbial perils of limited learning. Now the Alaska Commercial Company supports an English school upon this as upon each of the seal islands. Until English becomes the language of the country, American missionaries need not look to do much proselyting from the Russian church. In truth there does not seem to be any reason why they should. The Aleuts are peaceful and contented, and will ask for nothing that their present condition does not afford them until their characters shall have been changed by the intermingling of Anglo-Saxon blood. When this occurs they may want politics and an improved religion.

Just now they get along very well, all things

considered. They are lazy, but, as they have to subsist on fish and oil as staples, it could not be expected that they should be enterprising or industrious. They may sin, but they go to confession and are guaranteed forgiveness. They go to church on Sunday morning and have a dance in the evening. A dance on Sunday night is considered a very proper thing, and as there is no gossip and nothing stronger than tea for them to drink, perhaps no great harm comes of it. Onalaska consists of a straggling settlement of some sixty houses of natives and a few Company buildings, situated upon a sand-spit, about six miles from Captain's Bay, where Cook, the navigator, wintered in 1804–5. The original Aleutian houses are called barabaras, being nothing more nor less than such constructions as are known in the States by the name of root-houses. They are earthen huts, the floors of which are about two feet below the outside surface. They are supplied with one door and a small window, being damp, dark, and dirty. From a sanitary point of view they are not to be compared with the Indian tepees on the plains, which are light and well ventilated. These barabaras are constructed with a view to obtaining the greatest amount of warmth for the smallest expenditure of

fuel, for in former times fuel was exceedingly scarce.

Since leaving Kadiak, about seven hundred miles to the eastward, we have not seen any standing timber larger than a walking-stick. At present the Alaska Commercial Company brings up coal from Nanaimo for use on board their vessels and in their offices and other buildings, but previous to this the only fuel in use on these islands was drift from the northward and a viney sort of shrub called "chik-a-snik." Native women now go up to the mountains, and they do not have far to go, where they gather the "timber," which is rolled into bundles like hay, and carried down upon their backs. These women may be seen coming over the hills in single file, loaded down with "chik-a-snik," like pack trains in the mines. They are Christians, but, when loaded, look very much like squaws unconverted.

When chik-a-snik was the only fuel, as it is still with a great majority of the Aleuts, the barabara was found to be the warmest habitation for the people. They boil tea water with chik-a-snik as fuel, and that is the principal part of their cookery. Their fish is also prepared over it when not eaten raw. For warmth they formerly depended on their fur and feather

clothing and crowding together in close quarters. At present some of the natives occupy, rent-free, small frame houses, built and owned by the Alaska Commercial Company.

The villages of Unga and Belkoosky, farther to the eastward, are similar to Onalaska in the matter of huts, diet, and fuel, but they are not such important settlements as this. The natives live principally in barabaras; they rely on driftwood and chik-a-snik for fuel; they hunt the sea otter for wealth, subsist principally on fish, and profess the Greek Catholic faith. As a rule they are not neat in their persons and seldom attractive in appearance. Some of the women are taught to dress after the style of the humbler of their more enlightened sisters, but the general effect presented by them as they attend to their various duties is not very fascinating.

The bidarkie is a boat used by the Aleuts in hunting and fishing. A frame fifteen to twenty feet in length is constructed of narrow light strips of wood, lashed together with thongs of seal skin, and this frame is covered with skins of sea lion, from which the hair has been scraped. The seams are closed with grease, and as the entire frame is covered over with the exception of one or two round hatches

or holes for the paddlers to sit in, they have a craft light and seaworthy. One or two, sometimes three, men will go to sea in one of these frail barks, and though the waves may dash over them, no water is shipped so long as the frame holds together. In addition to the paddlers, who sit in the hatches, their wives and children are sometimes stowed away in the hold, so that they are entirely out of sight within the boat, lying between the feet and legs of the men. Fish and furs are similarly transported.

At Kadiak the natives use a single paddle, shaped like a narrow and pointed spade, but the people to the westward of that island invariably have double-bladed paddles, which they dip alternately port and starboard. The bidarkie is constructed somewhat after the model of a working-boat, but so light on the water that a person not accustomed to navigating it is extremely liable to capsize, unless having an expert on board to balance the craft. The natives are very dexterous in the management of the bidarkies, as may be supposed.

No matter where human beings may be cast away, they accommodate themselves to their surroundings. Here is a people who, living in a foggy, rainy, cold, inhospitable country, go to work and produce every article necessary to

their existence. They catch fish, which is dried for winter use and soaked in oil to make it digestible. The seal is captured for meat and clothing. Sea-lion skins are used for the construction of boats, in which the natives ply their trade. The intestines of the seal are prepared for the manufacture of waterproof shirts. Waterproof boots are made, with sea-lion flippers for soles, seal flippers for uppers, and walrus throats for tops. The sea is watched for wood, the mountains are climbed for the viney chik-a-snik, a light fuel, but still of service, whale sinews are used for thread, walrus ivory for spears, and tanned bird-skins for parkies, or outside robes, which are worn in dry, winter weather, and warm garments they are. So situated and provided for, the Aleuts are contented and attached to their homes, fond of their children and wives, seldom beating them except in the way of kindness.

As I have said that the Aleutian Islands are not suitable for agricultural or pastoral purposes, justice demands the admission that a dozen head of cattle, a flock of about twenty sheep, numerous chickens, and a few pigs are seen in Onalaska, but their presence is not due to nor appreciated by the Aleuts. Traders own and cherish them. The natives would

rather have a dead whale drift ashore than to own the best crop of the biggest farm in the United States. Dead whale is a great blessing in the Aleutian part of our Alaska possessions, and agricultural products are but little sought after or valued. The dead whale may be so putrid that the effluvia arising from it will blacken the white paint of a vessel lying one hundred yards distant, but, all the same, the whale is a blessing.

Men and boys dig holes through the monster's skin and descend into the lower regions to excavate the choice parts. Children claw out long strips of blubber, on one end of which they begin and chew until, inch by inch, yards of it disappear, and their little round bellies are puffed out like aldermanic paunches, while the oil runs in two small streams down from the corners of their sweet baby mouths—and they are happy.

CHAPTER X.

SEALSKIN SACQUES.

THE seal "fisheries" of the Prybilov Islands in Behring Sea control the markets of the world in the commodity which they produce in greatest abundance. Of the two islands in the group upon which the fur seal is taken, St. Paul furnishes eighty thousand skins annually, which is about one-half of all that are sent to market.

The fur sealskins of the world are mainly taken as follows: St. Paul's, eighty thousand; St. George's, twenty thousand (one hundred thousand from these two islands being all that our government authorizes the lessees to take); from Copper and Behring Islands, on the Asiatic side of Behring Sea, twenty-five thousand; mouth of the La Plata River, Brazil, about five thousand; Crozette Islands, Indian Ocean, fifteen hundred; from Shetland and Falkland Islands, off Cape Horn, five thousand,

and a few hundreds from Robbin's Island, in the Okhotsk Sea. In all perhaps less than one hundred and sixty thousand sealskins are taken annually, including those which are shot along the coast from California to Alaska. Although less than five thousand are taken annually on the Shetlands and Falklands, not less than twenty thousand so-called "Shetland fur sealskins" are sold every year. The possibility of such an incoherent state of trade is one of the peculiarities of commerce, caused by the fact that the Shetland fur seals are supposed to be the best in the world. But the Alaska fur seals are perhaps the best.

Robbin's Reef, in the Okhotsk Sea, was once a rich fur field, but the seals have been almost exterminated or driven away. The first seals discovered on Robbins Reef were found by a cruiser named Allen, from New London, Connecticut, about twenty-five years ago. Allen was an old whaler, who had lived ashore for a number of years, but in 1858 he set out in a new ship to cruise for oil. Touching at Robbin's Reef, he found fur seals there in such number as to enable him to make up a very valuable cargo of their skins. He loaded and hurried down to Honolulu for salt to preserve them, and finally got his prize safely to market. The

profits of that voyage paid for his new ship and enabled the jolly old sea dog to retire once more and live happily ever afterward; but within two years the seals were nearly exterminated in that locality.

When we purchased Alaska we obtained, along with an immense amount of worthless territory, two islands in Behring's Sea which are a mine of wealth, inexhaustible and incalculable in value so long as properly managed. The largest of these two islands, St. Paul's, is situated in north latitude 57° 8′ and west longitude 170° 13′, and is about twelve miles long by eight wide between extreme points. St. George's is situated forty miles to the southward from St. Paul's. From these two islands one hundred thousand fur sealskins — and, according to law, no more — may be taken annually. As they form the most extensive and valuable fur seal fisheries in the known world, some account of what occurs here may be acceptable to the ladies if to no other readers, for every lady is supposed to have a sealskin sacque, or is suspected of a desire to own one; and of course she should know something about the origin of the garment she wears. This knowledge, however, must be limited at best, for the comings and goings of the fur seal are so en-

veloped in mystery that a great deal about their movements is merely conjectural.

The Prybilov Islands are named in honor of a Russian trader, who discovered them a hundred years ago, when sealskin sacques were not so much in vogue as now. There were many Russian traders among the Aleutian Islands in those days, and it was while hunting for new sea-otter grounds for his employers that Prybilov discovered St. George's, one hundred and ninety miles north of the nearest point of the Aleutian Archipelago. St. Paul's was discovered during the following year. When first found, the islands, which are of comparatively recent volcanic formation, had no inhabitants, Aleuts being brought in by the Russians for the work of sealing. For a number of years (Prybilov's discovery soon becoming known to the other traders) there was great competition and an indiscriminate slaughter of seals, which threatened their extinction: but later the Russian government leased all Alaska to one company, and then steps were taken to prevent the extermination of the valuable animal.

The seals were protected so as to yield a certain revenue till Alaska was transferred to the United States, when, during the interregnum between the departure of the Russians and

installation of our government in actual possession, a general onslaught was made by every whaler and trader under the American flag in these waters, so that extermination of the seals again seemed imminent. Finally the islands were leased to one company, to the exclusion of all others, but with limitations as to the number of skins — not exceeding one hundred thousand — to be taken annually. Under this arrangement the number of seals is steadily increasing, and the lessees pay about three hundred thousand dollars annually into the Treasury. Competition in seal slaughter would destroy all the seals and this revenue within two years.

The matured male fur seal, when he draws up out of the ocean after a six or eight months' cruise in waters to us unknown, is a magnificent animal. Bold, bad, and beautiful, he takes a position in May among the basaltic rocks which are washed by the surf in storms, braces his broad chest upon his fore flippers, stretches his heavily maned, glossy, undulating neck, throws his tapering head aloft, and roars forth a hoarse bellow of defiance to all the world. He closes with a guttural growl that sounds like two quarts of pebbles rattling in his throat; while down by the corners of his threatening mouth, stockaded with ivory fangs, droop the long, gray lines of his aristocratic moustache.

Here he takes his stand, and in this position he will meet his expected family, or death. In the full vigor and power of a perfect physical condition, he may be killed, but cannot be driven away from the ground which he has chosen for his seraglio, for he is a polygamist of the most uncompromising character.

In June comes his multitudinous bride. The male fur seal is a huge, but symmetrical, brownish bulk of six to eight hundred pounds. The female is a meek, modest, submissive-looking little creature averaging about a hundredweight. She creeps up out of the water with a demure, downcast countenance, with the shining hair neatly brushed back from her pretty little head, and — arrayed in a brown sacque, think you? Not at all. She is a Quakerish looking matron in unpretending steel gray, but sleek and tidy, without a wrinkle in her dress.

There could not be a greater contrast in seeming than that between the male and female fur seal. He, aggressive, fierce, and bloodthirsty: she, meek and lowly, but, as rumors go, sly withal, and were she sole mistress of her lord's affections would, no doubt, exhibit a temper of her own. Competition keeps her spirit down, poor thing. There are more females than males.

Both male and female seals are perfect models of grace and symmetry. There is not an angle in the contour of either, but in size, color, and character they are opposites. One represents strength and courage, the other timidity and affection.

The baby seals are black, playful little imps, that roll and wrestle with each other on the grass, kiss and quarrel, learn from their fond mammas how to swim, and start out on their first voyage to sea in autumn, or furnish the Aleuts with veal through the winter. Some may swim and some must boil in their babyhood. Some are swallowed by sharks or "killers," and some return to celebrate their birth anniversary where they first saw the fog. In their second year they are safe on the Prybilov Islands, but exposed to danger along the coast, where neither age nor sex is spared by those who may be able to shoot or spear them. During their third year the males may be rapped on the sconce at St. Paul's or St. George's, wherever they haul out, and in their fourth year their chances for living to old age are considerably less. At five years they are comparatively safe again; at six, assurance policies might be issued to them at small premiums; and at

eight they have nothing to fear from the lessees of the Prybilov group.

The "pup" seals may be killed by the natives in the fall in sufficient numbers to afford food during the winter; but the fur sealskin is not marketable before the second year; they are at their best when the animal is four or five years old, but after six the coating of the hide runs gradually from fur to hair, till the latter predominates and the skin is not valuable. The females are never killed here, unless by accident, when slaughtering a drove.

The coast lines of the two islands are largely occupied by what are known as "rookeries," or breeding-grounds of the seal, which come here once a year. A sandy beach is not much favored by the seals. They select localities where basaltic boulders abound as plentifully as hills in a potato patch, and considerably larger. The "bulls," as they are technically called, arrive first. Where they go in the fall, or where they come from in the spring, is mainly conjectural, but as soon as the ice melts or floats from the shores of these islands the bulls appear and take positions among the rocks, all laying claim to tracts nearly uniform in size and shape, about twenty feet in diameter, on an average. Some seasons are so late in opening

that the ice is dug away from the shores by the company's employees in order to permit the seals to land.

The first to arrive are the strongest of the seals, and they take up claims nearest the water. Those which are later or weaker are driven further back to less desirable places. Might makes right in these matters, — seals which are not first-class fighters going to the wall or up the bluff. It is a case of the survival of the *fight*est.

The old bulls occupy their pre-emptions for weeks without going into the water, awaiting the arrival of the females, sleeping upon their ground, neither eating nor drinking during that time. This, however, is but preliminary to a much longer vigil and fast, which continues for three months after the arrival of the females. During this time they live by absorption of the blubber which they accumulate while away. When they depart they are weak and lean. When they return they are sleek and fat.

If there is fighting over the pre-emption and holding of ground for the harem, there is a much greater struggle a few weeks later. When the females arrive the old Turks in waiting dance down to the water's edge to escort them

to the harems. Then the fighting begins in earnest, the contestants tearing clumps of fur out of each other for the privilege of doing the honors and taking the party in steel-gray under their protection. Half a dozen males may be engaged for a moment in a very rough and indiscriminate tumble over a new arrival, but when the water is filled with new comers there is no time to be wasted in prolonged struggles, and as soon as one gallant is driven out of a contest he turns his attention to the nearest other charmer that may be landing. And thus affairs are so conducted that the honors are pretty evenly distributed along the water front and for a few rows back from the landing; but the elderly rakes to the rear are often left to sigh in celibacy all summer, while more fortunate lords of the seal kingdom revel in the Utopian luxury of fifteen wives apiece.

There are several classes of male seals which are deprived of the delights and refining influences of female society. There are young bachelors which have never yet had the courage to go in and fight for a claim, being apparently awed into remaining at a respectable and safe distance from the potent brown and tawny seniors. These young fellows haul out in crowds of thousands by themselves close to the

water and not far distant from the seraglios. They are from one to four or five years old, and they alternate their pastimes between lying on their backs among the rocks — where they fan their heated bodies with a hind flipper, if it is a warm dry day — and getting down into the water in front of the old Turks' summer residences where they endeavor with varying success to draw the females into sly flirtations.

Notwithstanding the fierce jealousy with which the females are watched and guarded, and contrary to what would be expected from their meek and sanctified appearance, there are breaches of decorum occasionally, which no conscientious person would attempt to defend, and elopements which, of course, cannot be excused and may be, possibly, never forgiven. Some of these romantic affairs lead to serious consequences, many a young fellow retiring from them so out of repair as to seriously depreciate his marketable value.

In cases of elopement the gay Lothario is generally handled according to the custom of the world in such cases, and his guilty partner treated with great leniency; but there are exceptions. Instead of quietly and carefully taking her by the back of the neck and carrying her to

the domestic circle as at first landing, her lord and master, provoked out of further forbearance by frequent escapades, will sometimes gallop through the family, knocking his other wives right and left, bouncing over the babies in his anger and indignation, and, overtaking the female fleeing from her home, thrashes her so soundly with his flippers that she puts up her little nose to his, kisses him in token of submission and better behavior, and then creeps back, apparently subdued and deeply penitent.

It is painful, however, to be compelled to admit that many elopements succeed, particularly toward the close of the season, when the lords of the rookeries are worn out with watching and fasting. Then the young fellows out in the surf practice their most fascinating antics to attract attention, and many a mother, ostensibly going down to teach her baby seal to swim, returns no more, and so, gradually, the social circle on shore is broken up for the season.

Seal killing on these islands for furs is nearly all done in about six weeks—from June 10 to July 20. When seals are wanted for meat the "pups" are preferred, but for fur the four-year olds are considered best. Awkward as seals may appear when moving on land, they can get

over the ground as fast, for a few rods and under favorable circumstances, as a man would care to run. Their powers of locomotion are almost entirely confined to the forequarters, the gutta-percha-like character of the flippers serving to raise the body and propel it forward. The hinder portion of the body, when the seal travels on land, works somewhat after the fashion of an angle worm or caterpillar, gathering itself together and springing forward as if connected with the forequarters by some powerful elastic attachment. With the fore flippers the seal can raise itself upon a rock or knoll two feet in height, and as the animal is strong the hinder parts are compelled to follow. The hind flippers, which act as rudders when in the water, drag along when the animal moves on land, like a couple of four-button kid gloves pinned upon the rear extremity of a lady's dress. In the water they are quite handy for steering, but on land they only go for ornaments, or for fans on proper occasions.

The best time for driving fur seals is on a rainy day, when the sun is obscured and the grass is wet, enabling the hinder portion of the body to slide along as easily and elegantly as a dress-train on a velvet carpet. On a dry, sunshiny day they cannot be driven, but, becoming

heated, fall prostrate, and will not rise for any amount of threatening. On such days, too, if not disturbed, they lie on their backs at the hauling places, fanning themselves with their hind flippers, the rookeries then reminding one of the fluttering in a crowded theatre or full church during the heated term; but the seal fans are black and noiseless, the latter being a quality not sufficiently considered by some ladies in cultured assemblages.

Seals being fat and scant of breath, and dressed in an exceedingly inappropriate suit for hot weather, seek out a climate of fog and rain for their summering places. That is one reason why they come to the Prybilov Islands, where mists and gloom prevail during the summer months, sunshine being a rarity and an abomination to the seal hunters. On favorable days a band of bachelor seals may be driven five or six miles, and when the air is very cool, the grass wet, and the sky cloudy, they can be pushed a mile in an hour. Yet they are not generally considered notable pedestrians. For driving, the men carry staffs four or five feet in length, and with this weapon they go among the seals, opening avenues and cutting off portions of the band at pleasure.

The seals are never killed near the "rook-

eries" or hauling grounds, upon which they land from the sea, but are driven away back to the settlement when possible, though in some cases they are slaughtered at remote points and their skins hauled in. But as the pelts weigh about eight pounds when first taken off, or ten pounds when salted, there is a great saving in transportation to compel them to carry their own skins and blubber in when practicable.

On the afternoon of our first arrival at St. Paul's, a band which had been driven three miles and a half was seen halted on a hill, unable to proceed, owing to the warmth of the day, although it was not distressing us to walk about in overcoats. In the evening, however, they were pushed down to a lagoon, where they soon became cool, after which they moved along without much trouble.

At six o'clock next morning killing commenced. Just before this hour twenty or thirty natives were seen going out to the drove, about half a mile from the village. They might have been taken for a party of machinists organized into base-ball clubs. Nearly all wore caps and were dressed in blue denims overalls and jumpers. About a dozen of the party carried hickory clubs of the diameter of a base-ball bat, but five feet in length. The others had knives.

Arriving on the ground the drivers were found to have cut off about one-fifth of the band, and were giving the smaller body a chance to cool off. After a few minutes a number not to exceed fifty or sixty were driven up toward the killers, who stood close together. As soon as the small band arrived at the fatal spot they were surrounded by the men with clubs, who proceeded with the utmost diligence to rap them on the nose or between the eyes. A smart rap of a base-ball club on the tip of a fur seal's nose puts him beyond recovery. Some are killed by being hit between their large, soft, intelligent eyes (the memory of which would haunt any but seal-killers), and others fall senseless from a blow on the back of the neck. One group after another was brought forward and knocked down so rapidly that in less than three hours nine hundred and ninety-seven seals had been killed and skinned. Out of each small band driven up to the killers, at least twenty per cent were turned away, this practice being pursued in order to keep up the supply from year to year.

After the clubbers followed two or three men with knives, who cut a short slit in the skin between the fore flippers and then stabbed the seal to the heart. Next succeeded the rippers

who split the skin lengthwise along the belly and cut around the neck and flippers to make way for the skinners, who will not permit their blades to touch the outer portion of the hide, where sand might dull the keen edges. On an average the skins are removed in two minutes each and thrown beside the carcass, whence they are hauled to the salting house. The skins, when hauled from the killing ground, are salted down in large bins, where they remain about a week, when they are removed and piled in tiers in the warehouse, like cured bacon in a pork-packing establishment. When sufficiently salted they are prepared for shipment by rolling two skins together, the flesh-sides facing, after which they are tied, forming a bundle about four inches in thickness and ten in length. In San Francisco they are packed in casks and go to London in that condition.

In London they are put through a course of treatment which destroys the grease and removes the long hairs, which stand out as a protection to the fur. This is done by shaving the flesh down and pulling the hairs out by machinery. After the skin has been sufficiently manipulated in these processes, it is dyed, and this is said to be the most important matter of all in connection with its treatment. It is as-

serted and denied that the skins can be successfully dyed in the United States, but at all events London controls the business at present.

Where the fur seals go, and upon what they subsist when absent from the place where they "most do breed and haunt," is a matter of much speculation. They arrive at the rookeries and hauling grounds fat and sleek in the summer. They remain for months without eating, and then, their numbers increased by perhaps a million of "pups," they disappear in the autumn poor and "stagey," to reappear in first-class condition at the usual time next year.

From the circumstance that occasional fur seals are killed off the coast of British Columbia and Southeastern Alaska, and that a few are taken among the Aleutian Islands as they journey southward, it is supposed by some observers that they follow the coast line, keeping a certain distance out to sea. But while they leave the Prybilov Islands in a swarm of millions, they are never seen in great numbers away from here. Close observation and occasional marking by some disfiguration lead people on the islands to believe that the seals return not only to the same islands, but that some of the old bulls occupy the identical spot of beach over which they rule for years.

Leaving these islands the seals probably scatter out through the Pacific in different directions in search of fish, the finding of which in sufficient quantities for the immense herd together would seem to be almost impossible. They are supposed to feed on fish and kelp, — that prolific product of the ocean which is found floating in nearly all latitudes, being torn from its rocky bed by storms and carried around the world upon tides and currents. Kelp furnishes the food for the seal, and it collects in tangled masses to form a couch for the shy sea otter, which sleeps upon it in a gale, and it has been used to soothe the hungry stomach of many a hunter who for days had failed to find other food.

While it is believed that fish and kelp form the chief article of seal subsistence, the seal, as stated, can live for months on his inner consciousness or blubber which is strongly flavored with seaweed. The stomach of a seal cut open on the islands proves to be quite empty. It reveals nothing of its owner's habits. It is a mystery.

The manufacture of oil from seal blubber may be much more satisfactorily studied from a written description than in the factory, for it is not productive of the most refined odors. When seal oil was made upon the islands the

"blubber-snatchers" followed the skinners and stripped the carcass a second time, removing the fat from all around the body in one sheet, which was rolled up and carted to the oil factory, where it was dumped into a wooden vat. The vats were supplied with steam from a boiler under ninety pounds pressure. Five or six wagon-loads of blubber were thrown into a vat, which was closed at the top, the steam turned on, and the boiling process continued for twelve to fifteen hours, at the end of which time the oil was pressed out and raised by cold water and run off the top into casks holding from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and eighty gallons each.

Carcasses of the seal killed for their fur yield about half a gallon of oil each when they are fat, but as the season advances they yield less, living by absorption of their own grease. In firing under the boiler, seal carcasses, blubber, bones, and flesh were used for fuel, and a warm fire they make, but the firemen must be relieved frequently, for the stench of the boiling blubber and of the burning bodies combined is too much for any set of human nerves to endure long at any one time. Since the foregoing was written, oil-making on our seal islands has been discontinued as unprofitable.

CHAPTER XI.

COMMUNISTIC.

THE natives of St. Paul's and St. George's islands live in a sort of communistic state, and are, withal, purse-proud aristocrats. They perform a few days' labor for the company outside of seal-taking, for which they are paid at the rate of ten cents per hour. All earnings for killing seals are distributed pro rata in classes, not only to those who work according to their ability, but to some who are unable to perform any labor. They are not frugal in their habits. They spend the greater part of their money on luxuries. Having house rent, fuel, fish and seal meat, doctor and schoolmaster free, they look around for something to buy. For the one hundred and twenty women on one island the company carries up a hundred dozen fine silk handkerchiefs which are generally worn on the head, a hundred dozen fine worsted colored stockings, almost as many

scarfs and nubias, dozens of fine shawls, one thousand two hundred yards of calico (some of these seal-killers' wives have a dozen dresses at a time), three hundred yards of other dress goods and flannels, with three suits of clothing, boots, and caps for every man and boy in the village, and good cassimere clothing is the kind they demand.

For food supplies on one island they have thirty-five thousand pounds of biscuit and crackers and two hundred and thirty barrels of flour; seventy chests of tea, fifty-two pounds each; four hundred boxes candles, stearine and paraffine; one thousand sacks of rice, fifty pounds each; one thousand gallons kerosene, etc.

A few years ago these same natives lived in barabaras (sod huts), twenty-five to forty persons in one room. They used blubber for lights and fuel till the lampblack hung in strings from the ceiling. Now they have frame houses, cook-stoves, coal, kerosene, and paraffine candles. They have good church buildings on each island, and schools with teachers as well as doctors, at the expense of the company.

The natives of the seal islands are not long-lived. Sixty is old age, to which few ever reach, and even those of fifty are scarce. The

population has not increased to any appreciable extent since the United States came into possession.

Like all other Aleuts, the natives of the seal islands die generally of consumption. When it once appears it makes rapid work, and in a few days its victim is laid away. Whatever may be the restorative qualities of fish-oil or blubber, it does not seem to benefit these people. They all eat enormously of these commodities, and, as a rule, die early. When attacked, physicians are in vain, and the patient falls at once into a condition of hopeless indifference, generally refusing medicine, or neglecting to take it during the doctor's absence.

These people give liberally toward the support of their church, and buy many blessed candles at high prices. The church decorations of silver chandeliers, candelabras, and pictures are both elaborate and expensive. Large gilt candles have been sent from the San Francisco Consistory at the rate of three for fifty dollars, and, though this was considered high, they were paid for. They were large candles, it is true, but, judging from the material of which they are composed, they should not cost more than four or five dollars each, even including the rather tawdry gilding upon their surfaces. But the

seal-islanders believe in blessed candles and can afford to pay for them.

The "second" priest, or "striker," as he is sometimes denominated by irreverent Yankees, the "second mate," as the sailors call him, is an institution of the Russian Church in Alaska. The second priest can hold services, but is not endowed with the right to perform the marriage ceremony. He leads the choir and attends on the first priest at mass. Sometimes the marriage ceremony is waived by parties entering into the marital state in the absence of a first priest, but when that individual comes around, he makes it all right, and it is considered that no harm has been done.

The vestments worn by the priest are very rich, but sometimes when he appears in garments of gold and white, with cavalry boots below, as often happens, the effect strikes strangers as being strong and novel rather than strictly ecclesiastic. It speaks somewhat loudly of church militant.

There is no beer nor whiskey to be had by the natives of the fur-seal islands. The Treasury Department forbids the manufacture here or the introduction of beverages of an intoxicating character. Efforts have been made in other Aleutian settlements to prevent the manufac-

ture of "quass," a sort of sour beer manufactured out of sugar, flour, and water; but where there are two or more trading companies in competition, the sugar can be obtained from one, if not from the other, and the suppression of the traffic in such a community is almost impossible. On the fur-seal islands, however, Treasury and company agents unite in efforts to suppress the manufacture of strong drink. It was, for a long time, difficult to reconcile these Aleuts to getting along without spirits. Under Russian rule it was the custom to issue spirits to the men when at work, and this created an appetite, which was sought to be allayed by other drink when merchantable whiskey could not be had.

Great trouble is now experienced by the company's traders elsewhere, owing to the natives getting intoxicated and raising disturbances, and it is a source of satisfaction to the agents on the fur-seal islands that they have been able to put an end to the manufacture of "quass." Even the old natives, who were the most difficult to wean, have become reconciled to total abstinence, and the fact that they have money in bank, and better houses, clothing, and food than were had when whiskey and "quass" prevailed, teaches them that fire-water is the

most expensive luxury poor people can indulge in.

Tea is now the strongest beverage that these people absorb. The tea used here is of a superior quality, the same chop as that furnished by the Russians years and years ago. The people don't want any other kind, and the company is perfectly willing to provide that which they prefer.

The seal islands are situated in Behring Sea, and during the warmer months are almost continually enveloped in fogs and mist. That is one reason why the seals make them their breeding grounds. There is no such thing in the seal business as "making hay while the sun shines," for the sun will drive the warm-coated animals into the water, when men with clubs could not do it; for though the two and four-year-olds may be herded and driven like sheep, the older bulls, when on the rookeries, cannot be forced away by threats of violence. Continued sunshine, however, would soon banish them from the islands.

St. George's Island, which, on a clear day, can be seen from St. Paul's, is an epitome of the larger one. The population, at the last count, was one hundred and two persons. They have a church, school-house, and frame dwell-

ings for the people, provided by the company, which controls in all these matters and furnishes the modern improvements according to the ideas of its officers, whose suggestions in these matters are adopted.

Near Garden Cove, on the southeast coast of St. George's Island, is a large sea-lion rookery, the beach being red with the monsters, which lay packed together like hogs in a stock car going to market. The sea lion is found also on St. Paul's, but not so numerously as on St. George's. The sea lion seems to be more like an overgrown seal, larger than the fur-seal bulls, but their coat consists of hair only, which is of a coarse reddish brown. The flesh of the sea lion is preferred to that of the fur seal, and the hide, while having no value in the markets of the world, is in great demand among the Aleuts and Indians of the Northern Pacific and Behring Sea. The leather is, however, used to a limited extent on emery wheels for polishing in cutlery factories.

The flippers of the sea lion are used for soles of the Aleut waterproof boots: the skin is converted into coverings for the large open boats known as "bidarras." These boats consist of a frame of wood with ribs imported from the Eastern States. The lion skins, the

hair shaved off, are stretched over the frame, fifteen or twenty being sewed together, and when dry they are as tight as a drum. These boats are constructed about forty feet in length and ten or twelve feet beam, with a carrying capacity of from two to four tons.

The bidarra is the favorite craft with the seal islanders as the two-hole bidarkie is with the Western Aleuts, the three-holed with the Kadiackers, and the fifty-foot cedar dugouts with the Hyda Indians. The natives of different localities stick to their old ideas with the most obdurate prejudice, those who use the two-holed bidarkie and double-bladed paddle being near neighbors to those who insist on a three-holed boat and single-bladed paddle. The bidarra is also the favorite with the Indians of Behring Straits, being navigated by them from the American to the Asiatic shore.

Sea Otter Island, lying about five miles southwardly from St. Paul's, is another landing-place for the fur seal, but only to a limited extent. Owing to the fact that it is not permanently inhabited, some marauders were in the habit of landing on the opposite side, where they could not be seen from St. Paul's, and killing whatever seal they could find, without regard to sex, age, or condition. The company reported

these facts to the Secretary of the Treasury, who decided that the intention of the act under which the lease was authorized appeared to be to give all the islands of the group to the lessees, for the regulation of the traffic and preservation of the fur seal. Then, as the company could not defend Sea Otter Island, the Government was asked to do so, and now the practice is to leave a revenue marine guard there during the sealing season.

Sea Otter Island is famous for sea fowls' eggs, and also for foxes, which latter so infest the place that a former revenue marine officer experienced great difficulty in keeping the pests from destroying everything destroyable in his cabin. Birds' eggs buried beneath the floor were ravished by these cunning animals, which, during the officer's absence, dug under the walls and made their way into the house. They are principally blue foxes, such as are found on St. Paul's and St. George's.

There is one more, Walrus Island, in the Prybilov group, about six miles eastward from St. Paul, to which male walruses resort in considerable numbers each year. It is also famous for sea fowl, which resort thither in countless millions for breeding purposes. But no fur seals are killed by the lessees upon either Otter or Walrus islands.

As only natives may be employed to kill the seals, no whites are permitted to remain upon the Prybilov Islands unless either in the service of the United States or of the Alaska Commercial Company — except the Russian priests.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FUR WEST.

GOING from the fur seal islands to Attou we lost a day. Not that we had merely wasted twenty-four hours, but we were a day behind the Attou people in our account of time.

We followed Greeley's advice to an extreme degree. We went west until we arrived in east longitude. Having crossed the one hundred and eightieth meridian west from Greenwich we were a day slower by our reckoning than the real time. According to the log-book of the "Rush" and the private journals of those on board, this page was written on Saturday, June 21. According to the people of Attou it was Sunday, June 22.

The bells of the little church on shore were ringing out at eight o'clock in the morning for early mass, the American flag was flying, and the people were wearing their very best calicoes and newest bird-skin "parkas."

Attou is the most westerly of our Aleutian islands, the extreme western settlement of the United States, and only two hundred miles from Copper Island, the nearest Russian possession, which from its situation would appear to be a continuation of the volcanic reef stretching across the Pacific from the peninsula of Alaska to Kamtschatka, which latter is but a trifle over four hundred miles from this island. This distance is so short and the route so natural that communication between Asia and America this way thousands of years ago may be assumed to have occurred often enough to stamp a record on the features of our aborigines, so-called.

The Aleuts have a form, face, and stature similar to some of the Asiatic races, and if the Indians on the main land are taller, leaner, and more muscular, that fact may be due to different conditions of life through many generations.

Take two couples of one tribe and place them in different climates where they subsist on different food and practice different exercises and games, pursuing different occupations, two hunting in boats, the others indulging in the chase on horseback or on foot, and in a few generations the successors of the two couples would present what might at first appear to be distinct races of people, speaking different

tongues, though traces of a common origin might be found. Such a condition of affairs would account for the difference between our Aleuts and inland tribes of Indians.

Terenty Prokopieff, the "Tyone" or Chief of Attou, is an Aleut, fifty-five years of age. He is a deacon or sub-priest of the Russian Church, reads and writes in Russian, and is agent of the Alaska Commercial Company, who have a store here. There are stories current of many wrecks from the East coming on shore here, but the Tyone knows of only two occurring in his time. In 1853 a Japanese junk came ashore keel uppermost, and at the same time three dead bodies were found on the beach, none being left to tell the tale of their voyage further than might be inferred from inverted bark and stark corpses. But in 1861 another junk from Japan was discovered by some otter-hunters who were out at sea in bidarkies from Attou.

The hunters were shy of the strangers, who also had fears for their lives, visions of pirates and cannibals scudding athwart the excited imaginations of both parties. The Aleuts paddled hurriedly toward shore, and, encouraged by this turn in affairs and urged by necessity, the voyagers from another land followed. They got on shore, when it was

discovered to the inhabitants of the island that their visitors consisted of only three Japanese, who had been drifting for days without provisions and without water, four of their shipmates, including their captain and mate, having died at sea.

The storm-tossed Asiatics were taken in by the hospitable Aleuts, kept here for eight months till the arrival of the steamer Alexander, which conveyed them to Eastern Siberia, where they disembarked to make their way home overland. There are no records here in Attou of the first coming of ships from the westward, nor have the present people any idea of their origin beyond a tradition of a hazy character.

The old people here talk of wars long since, time without date, between the inhabitants of Attou and those of islands to the eastward. A common story is that on one occasion the people of Atka, five hundred miles to the eastward, came to Attou and proceeded to exterminate the natives. When they departed they congratulated themselves on their complete success and went home rejoicing. Three or four years afterward, however, some hunters discovered that one woman had escaped, and lived to wander

about all this time in solitude as great as that experienced by Robinson Crusoe.

Pitying her lone condition or repenting their abortive attempt at complete extermination, they left one of their own number here, and the result was the repopulation of the island. This sounds somewhat like an Oriental tale of the origin of a people, and whether true or false it is hardly worth contradicting. Similar stories are told of other portions of Alaska.

It is said that three hundred and fifty years ago fierce wars prevailed between the men of Kadiak and those of Onalaska. Excursions were frequent from one island to the other, seven hundred miles distant, and it generally occurred that the attacking party got the best of these fights, a result of which was that the victors carried the women of the vanquished away to their own dominions. This necessitated retaliation and the carrying of the opposite party's women home by way of reprisals. It was like the matches and return games of base-ball clubs, cricketers, and sharp-shooters of the present day in the United States, except there was more real sport, less eating and drinking, and more valuable prizes, it is to be hoped.

The population of Atton consists of one hun-

dred and thirty-two persons, the poorest of the poor among the Aleutians. The Tyone, however, can remember when the island contained a great many more people, who have died or gone to hunt a living where it may be more certainly obtained. These one hundred and thirty-two persons, of whom only thirty-four men and boys are able to hunt, owe the Alaska Commercial Company five thousand dollars for goods to keep them alive. There was a time when Attou was considered the centre of the best sea-otter-hunting region in Behring Sea, but wanton cruisers came in as soon as the Russians were bought out, and with guns constantly in the hands of their hunters in small boats, hunting at all seasons, discharging firearms, leaving offal upon the rocks and islands, the otter began to disappear rapidly. The revenue steamers coming into these waters later have driven the marauding schooners away, but serious damage was done before their coming.

During Russian rule, the Tyone says, the people here captured from three hundred to seven hundred sea otter a year, but of late years from twenty to thirty skins are all that they get. The company has been trying to get the people of this island to move to the mainland, where they could be supported at less

cost. But, like other poor people, those of Attou cling to their impoverished homes, which consist merely of a few earthen huts, with not a hundred dollars worth of furniture in the entire settlement. But the bones of their dead relatives are buried here in the sand beside the half underground habitations of the living, and therefore the people refuse to go.

The store may be taken away, but the agent, who is Tyone and deacon, will remain with his people, and with them trust to the sea to furnish them food, clothing, and fuel. Some of these Attou people go now for a year without tea or flour, unless in case of sickness, when the agent issues some indispensible article out of the company's stock, and enters the proper amount of debit upon the company's books, without much hope of ever seeing the account cancelled, unless the otter comes back. This seems to be a remote contingency, but possibly it may occur.

Of vegetables, canned goods, and the many little comforts of civilization these people know nothing except by tradition. Now, in the summer solstice, the peaks, two thousand feet in height, surrounding the settlement, are covered with snow, drifts of which, fallen last winter, still lie in the gulches at the rear of the huts.

Nearly all the children run about barefooted and barelegged, with a little shirt or bird-skin gown as their only covering. At least, most of them were in that condition until the arrival of the "Rush," the officers of which, seeing their destitution last year, came provided on this cruise with bags of clothing, not only for the children, but for women, some of whom were but scantily arrayed for either summer or winter. They have been filled up, too, with bread and—what they prize most of all—good tea, with sugar to sweeten it. This makes them happy for the time, and they look forward to a year's diet on dried fish, as the staple article of food, with the consoling confidence that another day will come next summer, when the little steamer may drop anchor in the harbor, to afford them another season of tea and bread, with second-hand dresses for the women and children.

Even Attou, poor and destitute as the people are, has a church, and, although no priest has been here for several years, services are held on every Sunday, commencing on Saturday evening at sunset. The rite of baptism is administered by the chief, but he cannot perform the marriage ceremony nor administer communion. When the next priest comes he will have plenty

to do tightening the matrimonial knots that have been loosely formed in the interim.

The lumber in the little church, the walls of which are not higher than a man's head, has been sawed out of driftwood, most of it probably coming from the Yucon River. A frame of four uprights, with as many cross-pieces and a whip-saw, constitute the lumber factory at Attou; and the sea furnishes the logs, for not a stick of timber as large as a bean-pole grows upon any of the Aleutian Islands. The roof of the church is thatched with dried grass, which here grows tall and coarse, one variety like wild rye.

Just outside of the front door of the church is a little pavilion or belfry, upon the top of which a man standing upon the ground could put his hand. Under the four-sided roof of this modest structure hang two bells green with age and dampness. All the churches in these settlements have a number of bells, that at St. Paul's boasting a full octave, but in other and humbler communities there are from two to five bells, handed down from the days of Russian rule. In Sitka and Onalaska they hang high in towers above the church, aspiring to the heavens, but in poor places, such as Attou, they are found close to the earth, though possibly

drawing worshippers quite as near to God. After church on Sunday evening it is no harm to have a dance; but on Saturday evening such a step is a sin in Alaska.

If the original Aleuts were not worshippers of the sea, it must have been because when they were cast away here from the Asiatic coast their idol-worshipping proclivities could not be washed out of them by the illimitable waters. But had Christians never discovered this people, and had some aboriginal religious reformer risen among them, he must certainly have located the All-good in the sea. It was to the sea that they originally looked for food, raiment, fuel, and means of locomotion. They remain in that condition to the present day. A few berries grow upon the Aleutian Islands, but there is not an island from Sitka to Atton that is fit for agricultural purposes. How could there be, with snow on all the hills, down to the water's edge in midsummer?

The sun is worshipped by many people as the origin of the principle of life, but how could reverential thoughts be directed to that orb in a land where he is not visible once a month? What good could come from so cold and careless a God? But the sea brings fish, on which the Aleuts live year in and year out. It

furnishes sea-otter, the fur of which is of the finest, and, before being taken in hand by the Christians of the Czar, these barbarians could afford to wear sea-otter cloaks. The sea is the home of the waterfowl which furnishes eggs and poultry. When fish, eggs, and fowl fail, sea-urchins are made to supply their places, and in seasons of greatest distress kelp becomes an article of food. The sea brings wood for fuel and timber for the interiors of their earthen huts, and upon the bosom of the waters these people paddle in buoyant barks of sea-lion skin for business or pleasure. They owe nothing to the land but their mud hovels, and the island was upheaved from the generous sea to afford them their resting-place. The sea is virtually their home and their existence. Without it they must die.

No flour, no vegetables of any sort are seen in most of these Aleutian huts from beginning to end of the year. Fish is their staple, and, for long times together, their only article of food, lubricated occasionally by oil; and fish are plentiful around all of these islands. Here they have salmon, trout, flounders, codfish, and a sort of kelpfish, very fat but delicate and nutritous. This is the best of all, though salmon forms the greatest source of supply.

The kelp-fish is about the size of mackerel, but the stripes upon its body are shaded from a dull brown to a bright yellow. At first glance the stripes remind one of the deep brown kelp, touched out with yellow ochre. These fish cannot be caught with hook and line, but are speared down among the rocks, and consequently they can only be taken in smooth water. They, like salmon, are dried for winter use.

The salmon here are not large, nor, at this season, fat. They are dry and almost without flavor. The men of the steamer hauled a seine at the mouth of a creek near the village and caught a sufficient supply of salmon for use on the voyage, and though the fish, when cleaned and laid out, had bright orange color within, which, tipped at the tail and edged at the sides with silver, presented a pretty picture they were generally pronounced poor eating, this is a delicacy, of course. For a steady diet, with not much else to accompany it, no doubt salmon is a most valuable article of food, for its very dryness insures the possibility of its being eaten for a long time without repugnance.

The women of Attou are of a retiring disposition, and though they may be poor and hungry, do not beg—except for tobacco. After

all they have endured through lack of food and clothing, filling them up with tea and bread and putting clean dresses upon them, still leaves a want which only tobacco can supply. It may be discouraging, but it is true. Savages and barbarians seem to have a natural craving for the weed, although its use is supposed in civilized countries to be the result of a cultivated or perverted taste — according to the views of those who use or eschew it.

CHAPTER XIII.

ISLANDS, ROCKS, AND MUMMIES.

KYSHKA is one of the most interesting places we visited. The island, one of the Aleutian chain, runs to sharp points, which look as though they would wash away, but it is a solid rock at bottom nearly all the way around, and it stands the assaults of the sea very well. The settlement was supposed not to be of a permanent character. About twenty-five hunters were brought here in May from Atka, an island three hundred miles to the eastward, for sea-otter hunting, and they were to return in the fall. They brought their families with them, and fixed up barabaras in a sand ridge so steep and narrow that the dwellings on one side, facing the sea, might be opened into those behind them, facing inland, in a few hours by a couple of sappers and miners. All of the habitations of these people were huddled together irregularly, wherever the formation of the ridge was such as to offer a chance for the

greatest amount of underground space with the least amount of digging. The people here numbered one hundred and one persons.

Looking around, as you stand upon the summit of this ridge, you see nothing that looks like human habitations, but, descending to either side, a small door, three feet in height and a foot and a half in width, may be seen. The ground is so dug out as to form a descending grade toward the door. Above the surface is a small mound of sand, which looks as if it might have been blown up by the wind, having no regular form. Grass in scattered bunches waves upon the mound, as it does on other portions of the ridge.

To enter at the little doorway a man must either turn his face toward the outside and go in backward, which movement affords an opportunity to reach one leg down into the descending hallway, or he can get down upon his haunches and squeeze through, his shoulders rubbing the top of the entrance as he bends his head so as not to bump it. The visitor will then descend along a corridor or outward apartment, where the small fireplace is set off beneath a hole in the roof to the inner room, where the Aleut can stand erect, but the average American bows his head to save the rafters. Here,

in an apartment about six by eight feet on the sides, reside the Aleutian otter-hunter, his wife, and two or three children, and generally one or more relatives of either the husband or wife. A short bed on each side accommodates them all. The bed consists generally of grass mats spread upon the floor within the space defined by a pole four or five feet in length, laid upon the ground to keep the bedding from going adrift around the room.

Once within, the visitor sees that the walls of this Aleutian residence are made by digging the sand out, stakes being set up to keep the sides from caving in. Uprights, stringers, and rafters of driftwood are put up, and sand from the hillside shoveled down upon them for a roof. The floor and portions of the sides are covered with matting made of dried grass; a box or two which hold the clothing of the family, and a cheap clock, complete the kit of furniture; a religious picture is in every barabara, and in most of them a bottle containing holy water hangs beside the sacred work of art, which may be worth ten cents by the dozen. A piece of transparent sea-lion intestine in the roof serves for a skylight.

Of such habitations as that just described there are twenty or twenty-five in the sand

ridge overlooking the Kyshka harbor. The church does not greatly differ in architectural points from the residences, except that it is longer and consists of only one apartment. All the other churches we have seen in Alaskan settlements contrive to have a sanctuary containing the altar, which is concealed from the view of worshippers by a curtain, when the solemn mystery of the transubstantiation is taking place; but here circumstances seem not to admit of such an apartment without digging into the house in the rear. Besides, there is not an ordained priest here, the services being only such as may be performed by a deacon. Yet the people must have a church, though they are compelled to stoop down and crawl in one at a time, and in spite of the fact that a man cannot stand erect against the sides when in. Standing upon the ridge the church would not be noticed were it not for a small cross sticking up in a slightly raised mound of sand, and it is only by going around to the low door in front that evidences of an entrance into the side of the hill are discovered.

Farther are three wooden double crosses. These, surrounded by habitations of the living, indicate the cemetery, three otter-hunters having been capsized and drowned at sea here-

abouts a year ago. Such casualties do occur notwithstanding the skill used in handling their bidarkies. That year the party captured ninety-two sea-otter, but as yet few have been taken.

Only one otter was seen around Kyshka since the party came in May, — it is now June 26, — but all of the men except two are out on the reefs and rocks lying adjacent to this island, and by fall they may bring in enough to make a profitable season of it. Whether or not they go back in the fall to Atka depends on the agent at Onalaska, who regulates these affairs, sending parties out in his schooners when desired, and taking them off when considered most expedient.

Although no great amount of fur has as yet been obtained, the people seem much better off than those at Attou, a great deal of which may be due to industry. The women here are tidy in their dress, and the barabaras are kept much neater than in Attou, where one could not make a charitable visit without experiencing a feeling of uneasiness as to what might be involuntarily carried away. Possibly the mingling with whites, Finlanders, Russians, and others at Atka has led these people into ways of cleanliness which the more westerly

Aleuts palpably stand in great need of. A large amount of charity in the way of a change of clean clothing might well be bestowed upon Attou, but at least a box of kitchen soap should go with it, and the people should be compelled to use it energetically.

The Aleuts now upon Kyshka are probably happier than they would be if in Atka, for although they get no fish they have plenty of sea-lion meat. At the time of our visit meat and flippers were hanging upon poles to dry, and the stomachs of sea lions filled with blubber lay around on the ground ripening. The blubber is cut and packed into these paunches, which are large enough to hold fifteen or twenty gallons, and the opening being securely tied, they remain in this condition till decomposition occurs, when, rancid and unpleasant as it would be to some people, the oil is acceptable to the Aleuts, young and old, as honey to the followers of Moses in the desert. From the great paunches of the sea lion it is poured into bladders and kept at hand ready, like golden syrup, to be poured over the dried seal or sea-lion meat, or fish, as the case may be, when it forms a luxurious lubricator. When the weaned baby wakes up crying in the night, a small skin of rancid oil is put to its mouth, and as the

smooth liquid glides down its throat, it acts like soothing syrup, and under its magical influence the little darling sinks to sleep again and resumes its pleasant dreams of beautiful angels with flippers for wings, flocking about the beach or in the water.

In addition to sea lion the women and children of Kyshka, whose husbands and fathers were away hunting the sea-otter, were revelling in whale-meat and blubber, a grampus having come ashore on the morning of our arrival. Consequently they were happy. When there is plenty of meat and blubber at home and the men are abroad, affairs go on quietly but rather monotonously in an Aleutian settlement. It requires the men to obtain sugar, manufacture quass, get drunk, and beat their wives to drive dull care away.

In the year 1805 the people of Oumnak Island discovered smoke or steam ascending from the sea about thirty miles to the northward of them. The vapor was succeeded by fire and ashes, and the volcanic eruption continued till an island or rock was created, which now forms one of the most striking of the Aleutians, all of which are bold and picturesque. This latest formation of the archipelago, an island known to have been

raised up out of the sea within the memory of man, was named for St. John, the Theologian (Bogoslov). Some portions of the original formation have fallen down, it would appear, for it is certainly not now so large as it is reported to have been. Its height is about two hundred and seventy feet, and its length along the crest from north to south, — its longest line — is somewhat over five hundred feet. It rises from the water's edge on both sides to a sharp ridge, the walls being as steep as a Gothic roof. A few hundred yards out from the northernmost extremity of the island stands a pillar sixty-seven feet high, looking at a distance like a sentinel posted to keep watch for the approach of an enemy.

As we first saw Bogoslov it loomed dimly through the distance of a misty atmosphere in a threatening manner, its size being apparently magnified by the thick weather. As we approached, and its dim outlines were sharpened into jagged points all along its summits, flocks of sea birds began to circle out around the steamer, at first keeping a respectful distance, but as other flocks sailed out to reinforce the skirmishers all came whirling closer and closer to inspect the strange visitor, for ships seldom

sail within sight of Bogoslov. Next a band of sea lions appeared on our port beam, their sharp noses sticking out of the water like hogs, making their way toward the rock which is their Gibraltar. Looking surprised at the steamer, which was between them and the island, they finally settled down out of sight beneath the waves.

Sharper now became the projections of the rock, and the number of birds thickened the air as we steamed ahead through the mist. Approaching still nearer, the sky overhanging the island was absolutely blackened by birds on the wing, that swung and careered over their rocky home as mosquitoes are seen to darken the air at wood-landings in the evening along the upper Missouri River. The sky was almost shut out from view by birds.

At the foot of this immense rock, and from end to end, the narrow beach is fringed with sea lions which occupy the base as water fowl hold possession up above. The foaming waves which break on the scattered fallen boulders forbid the approach of a boat, and as the sides are too steep for scaling, the inhabitants above and below rest in apparent security from marauding man. The fat, chubby, oblong murre, which at first came to meet us in long lines,

circling around the vessel from stem to stern with sidelong looks, as if inspecting hull and rigging, followed us out with an impudent air of inviting us to come and get them if we could.

These birds, though strong on the wing when once in the air, are so short and stout that, unless heading toward the wind, they experience trouble in rising from the water. Being alarmed when floating on the waves they throw out their short wings and flap and flutter like goslings making an unsuccessful attempt at flight. With the wind abaft they often fail to rise at all, and after half-running and flapping on the surface of the water for a few rods, their webbed feet aiding in sustaining them, they suddenly bethink themselves of another way of escape, and, like alarmed prairie dogs starting into the first holes they can find, they plunge beneath the waves, and are seen no more.

There are other volcanic rocks and islands, and there are active volcanoes, too, on the course we have traveled from Attou to Bogoslov, among the most noted of which are the Four Mountains. It may be repeated that there is not a bit of tame scenery in the Aleutian Archipelago from the peninsula to the western limit of our possessions. Mountains of the most picturesque character rise abruptly out

of the sea, their summits being veiled in clouds or banks of mist, their sides covered with snow. We have been cruising along the Alaskan mainland and islands from May to July from Cape Fox to Attou, and never yet have we seen land without snow. Not alone packed high up in cool crevices, but down almost to the water's edge. Yet the agricultural resources of this country are actually asserted by certain writers on Alaska to equal those of New England, where corn cakes and pumpkin pies flourish. At Four Mountains, one of the islands passed on the run from Attou, mummies are found in a cave, and though we did not touch at the island and consequently could not have descended into the cave to resurrect any of the remains, the writer saw at least one mummy said to have been brought from Four Mountains; and reports of them having been once deposited there in numbers are too well authenticated to be doubted. It is stated that previous to having been converted to Christianity it was the custom of the Aleuts to subject their dead heroes to the condensing influences of a stream of cold water for a number of days, after which the "subject" was always placed in a sitting posture within a cave, where the flesh hardened and remained upon the

bones. The process was a simple and effective water cure, but is most worthy of consideration in contrast with the custom of southeastern Alaska and British Columbia Indians, who burn the bodies of their dead, while those of the plains lay the remains away in tree tops or up on poles to dry. On the Aleutian Islands fuel is so scarce as to be more precious than dead bodies, even of heroes, and it could not be appropriated to cremation, but water was found to answer the purposes of preservation and it was cheap. In southeastern Alaska and British Columbia the supply of wood is, to the Indian mind, inexhaustible and there the dead are by fire preserved from corruption. On the plains the sun-god rarifies the atmosphere till it is all-sufficient to mummify the dead body; and so the children of nature live upon nature wherever they may be, always having their ideas of the future colored by their surroundings.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR ARCTIC RELATIONS.

RETURNING from the western extremity of the Aleutian Islands to Onalaska, the "Rush" was coaled, watered, and prepared for another cruise. On July 10 she steamed out from Onalaska harbor, headed northward, and was soon under the encouraging influences of a southwesterly breeze which promised to be of great assistance. On the next day, however, the breeze was succeeded by a calm and great heavy swells, which came rolling in from the quarter whence we had our favoring wind on the day before. It was a beautiful day in the sense of stillness, but the sky was overcast as usual. It was said that as soon as we got north of the parallel of the fur-seal islands we should have sunshiny weather, but our experience all the way up through Behring Sea and Behring Straits into the Arctic was such as to dispel the idea of clear skies in the region visited. There was sunshine, it is true, but in very small

quantities compared with the thick weather encountered. On July 11 we passed the latitude of the seal islands and had fog all day. On the 12th the sky was overcast all day. On the 13th we passed St. Lawrence Island, and that night lay to, owing to the bad weather. Soundings had been taken at intervals all along up from Onalaska, giving only fifteen to twenty fathoms at forty to sixty miles from land. The eastern side of Behring Sea is very shoal, and probably has less depth now than when any of the surveys recorded upon existing charts were made. The Kuskoquim and Yukon, both immense rivers, continue to bring down hundreds of tons of mud daily, which is deposited and spread out along the shore and far to seaward. The Yukon, like the Mississippi, has an enormous deposit at the sea, compelling the water to seek such outlets as it can force through the immense bars. Its mouths are numerous, but all shallow, preventing vessels of any considerable draft from entering or even approaching, but the river itself is as large, once in, and as navigable as the Father of Waters. The Kuskoquim is similar in character, and the latter is gradually filling up the sea south of the Yukon. Around the shore from off the mouth of the Yukon to St. Michael's there is,

in places, not more than three fathoms of water fifteen miles from land.

The weather had been against us latterly to a discouraging degree. Captain Bailey started northward with a view to investigating the illicit rum traffic in violation of the revenue laws in Behring Straits, and with favorable weather something might have been accomplished. Thick fogs, however, going up and coming down, shut out the land at times when it was most desirable to cruise close to shore in shoal waters. We entered the Straits on the night of the fourteenth, and it was hoped we might have clear weather.

About four o'clock on the morning of the fifteenth we passed Fairway Rock, dimly seen through the thick fog rising abruptly out of the water, looking at a short distance like a haystack. We had a better view of it after midnight on the sixteenth, and at five miles distance it showed up naked and abrupt, rising five hundred feet above the water without so much as a spoonful of soil or a leaf of vegetation visible upon it. Fairway Rock stands just south of the Diomede Islands, between which, only five miles apart, the line runs which separates America from Asia, the United States from Russia, or, to put it still more nicely, the line between Alaska and Siberia.

The Diomedes are two islands in Behring Straits almost in a line between Cape Prince of Wales on one side and East Cape on the other. From Cape Prince of Wales to the most easterly of the two islands is twenty miles; from East Cape to the larger and most westerly of the Diomedes is twenty-five miles; from outside to outside of both is about nine miles, making fifty-four miles across from continent to continent, with two stepping-stones between. The narrowest point, however, is a trifle north of this, where the crossing may be made to East Cape, in a direct line, in forty-eight miles.

Intercourse between the natives on either side has long been maintained, longer than we or they can tell. They have crossed from one continent to the other in large, open boats, and still do so for the exchange of commodities: and doubtless for hundreds, if not thousands, of years before Columbus crossed the Atlantic there was marrying and giving in marriage between Asia and America. Now, on our extreme northwestern coast the people are called Eskimos. Farther to the eastward and southward their cousins are called North American Indians.

At the present time considerable traffic is made by "pirates" with our Indians, on the

shores of Behring Straits and the Arctic, in bone, oil, and walrus ivory. Neither the oil nor ivory are very valuable, but whalebone is worth three dollars a pound in New York, and the manner in which it is obtained from the Indians leaves the trader a clear profit of about two dollars and a half per pound. Rum is bought in Honolulu for seventy-five cents a gallon; it is watered one-half, and a gallon of this diluted but villainous drink is given for a pound of bone.

The Arctic is the summer residence of the right and bowhead whales, the only kinds from which great quantities of bone are obtained. A bowhead will furnish from a thousand to two thousand pounds of bone, all of which comes out of the mouth, but which is not bone at all. Right whales are not quite so valuable for bone, but contain more oil. They yield from a hundred to a hundred and fifty barrels of oil, as a general thing, but as much as three hundred barrels of oil have been taken from a single whale.

The Indians up this way go to sea in skin boats and strike whales when discovered, having seal-skin buoys at the ends of their harpoon lines, so that if the monster gets away they have a chance to follow him up. Their old har-

poons were made of glass heads, that with every struggle worked farther and farther into the flesh, and when thrown in sufficient numbers resulted in bleeding the animal to death. Of course the capture of a whale is an important affair to these people, as in addition to a thousand pounds of bone and a hundred barrels of oil they get an immense supply of meat, which is buried for future use. Even though the whale should come ashore weeks after the hunt and be found in a putrid condition, the bone is good, and the flesh is not wasted.

The traffic about Cape Prince of Wales and Clarence Sound between "pirates" and the Eskimos resulted in a number of murders a few years ago. Rum and breech-loading rifles were furnished to the natives in exchange for their commodities, and the result was not conducive to the welfare of the natives, profitable to the revenues of the country, nor just to legitimate traders who have scruples against infraction of the laws of the land and of morals. The Indians along the straits get some land furs also, which form a considerable item in this trade, although the skins are by no means so valuable as those obtained farther south in Alaska.

The rum dealt out to the Indians is not only bad in that it is of the cheapest quality of

sorghum fermentation, but it is vile in respect that it is smuggled in from the Sandwich Islands, while honest Pennsylvania and Kentucky whiskey pays a tax of ninety cents a gallon.

A remedy could and should be found for this state of affairs, and it might be applied with profit to the public purse.

What is needed is a United States steam vessel of about five hundred tons, that would be able to carry enough coal from San Francisco or Nanaimo for a six months' cruise. She should be constructed with a view to going into the ice without having her stern-post and rudder carried away. She should be ready to enter the straits as soon as the ice opened, in May or June, and cruise along the coast as high up as Kotzebue Sound, or even to Icy Cape, and down to Port Clarence, then work along the coast southward to San Francisco for winter quarters. A vessel of that class so managed would doubtless break up the piratical operations which have been carried on in these waters.

The "Rush" made an unsuccessful run to the Arctic because she was too late, not being rigged for going into the ice with safety, and because her short supply of coal would not

admit of her remaining so far north in bad weather. Had the weather been clear she might have run across a contraband trader, even at that late day in the season, although those vessels were supposed to be generally to the north and east of Cape Prince of Wales, especially such as are rigged for whaling as well as trading. Neither in the straits nor in the Arctic did we see a sail of any size or shape, — not even a canoe ; and it was only at short intervals that we could see the land.

At 7.30 o'clock on the morning of the fifteenth of July, — then, according to dead reckoning, under the lee of the Diomedes, with Cape Prince of Wales on the starboard beam, calculating from Fairway Rock, the last land seen, — the "Rush" was hove to for clear weather. Dredging was commenced again in the cause of science, and it at once became apparent that we were drifting rapidly to the northward. This continued with thick fog till five o'clock in the evening, when the veil lifted and we picked ourselves up, according to observation, twenty-six miles to the northward of the Diomedes and forty miles northeastwardly from East Cape to Siberia. We had drifted with the current at least twenty miles during the day and were well into the Arctic Ocean.

As far as could be seen to the northward the sky was clear and the Asiatic coast, which trends off to the northwestward, was visible for fifty or sixty miles, but the American side was still enveloped in a thick fog. About six o'clock this lifted so as to show the top of a mountain on Cape Prince of Wales for a few minutes, but this soon disappeared again. Presently, however, the gray mists began to move off to the northeast, and then the rugged line of peaks on the extreme northwestwardly point of our possessions stood out picturesquely, the low land along the coast northeastward of the cape being still, and to the last, concealed from view.

Then we had before us a noble picture of the bold headland of Siberia on the starboard beam, Cape Prince of Wales on the port, and, lying almost equidistant between them, the Diomedes at the head of the straits. We were in the Arctic, with a pleasant but cool evening; the thermometer indicating 32° above all day. It promised to be a clear night, and with this hope we got under way, headed southward for the straits again, intending to lay in under the southern shore of Cape Prince of Wales to ascertain the condition of affairs thereabouts.

A strong current was setting up from Behring Sea created in part by the southeast winds

which we had experienced on our way north, and we made slow progress against it. Still we had plenty of time to reach the Cape before morning, if "morning" can be understood where there is no night, and there was no apparent cause for anxiety. Once more we began to hope for an all-day sun, but again, by half past ten, the northern sky was obscured by a bank of clouds which had come up out of the southwest. The sun disappeared behind the clouds but darkness did not come. At 11 P.M. the sky in the southeast was aglow with reflections from behind the clouds in the opposite point, over which the purple and crimson fringed clouds held out a signal that the sun was still above the horizon. As these hues faded out, a delicate straw tint appeared above the low clouds in the north, and this soon deepened to a saffron which by midnight became a rich salmon color, and dawn was announced as at hand in all her glory. Although during the night and at twelve o'clock the northern sky was obscured by clouds, about nine degrees above the horizon there was a broad rent upon which the changes going on below were recorded, that we might see and know. There was an abundance of clear sky overhead, the blue of day so light that not a

star could make itself visible at any time. It was clear day all night, brighter at twelve than at eleven, if possible, and brighter at one in the morning than at twelve, and brighter then also than at breakfast time, when the clouds and fog prevailed.

The fog had formed in fanciful shapes, owing to the uneven surface of the land from which it had been lifted, and through this the light of the morning sun, toned by the strong colors of the north, were cast in a wonderfully striking manner. The pale sea green, like the sun shining through the crest of a wave, appeared in the north, again bordered by purple of richest dye, while crimson and molten gold appeared lower down. The "brassy" character of the sunset two nights before was here absent, the effects now being of the richest character possible to conceive.

Turning out at seven o'clock in the morning and going upon deck, it was ascertained that at 3.30 A. M. the fog had shut out the land, and the "Rush" was obliged to haul off, owing to the presence of shoals and reefs which could only be avoided in clear weather, as charts cannot be relied on for information concerning them. Then we stood down the straits again with the intention of putting in to Port Clar-

ence, a resort of northern cruisers; but this could not be made with safety, owing to the thick weather: and there was nothing to be done but continue southward against wind and tide. A two-knot current sets up through the straits and that is what makes this the most desirable route for entering the Arctic. It is well known to whalers that they can get into the polar sea through Behring Straits much earlier than from the head of the Atlantic.

Coming southward the temperature of the sea water ran up ten degrees in one day; entering Norton Sound, it went up six degrees in an hour. Soundings yesterday showed shallow water all the way down on our side of Behring Straits, ten miles off Port Clarence giving only seven and a half fathoms, which was also about the depth for hours in Norton Sound till it shoaled to three and a half. The water here is shallow, warmed and discolored by the sand from the Yukon River. The saline matter is twenty per cent less than that in the Arctic.

CHAPTER XV.

ST. MICHAEL'S AND THE YUKON.

ST. MICHAEL'S, or Michaelovsky Redoubt, as it was formerly called, stands upon an island in the southeast bend of Norton's Sound, being situated in latitude 63° 29′ 54″ north, and 162° 8′ west longitude. This was established as a landing-place and headquarters of the Russian-American Company for the Yukon River trade.

In olden times — that is to say, under Russian rule — all goods intended for the Yukon trade were landed here, and generally taken around to the river in skin boats, or bidarras, but at present small stern-wheel steamboats are employed for that purpose. These boats do not go out to sea from St. Michael's, but pass through a sort of slough or canal, to the river, which they reach in about fifty miles. They carry merchandise up to the various trading posts in the summer, and in the following spring bring down the furs which are received during the winter months.

The Alaska Commercial Company occupies the old redoubt, a picturesque collection of log buildings on one side of the bay, while three miles across were a number of new buildings, headquarters of the Western Fur and Trading Company. On the same side with the redoubt, about half a mile away, is the Mahlemute village, consisting of thirty or forty log huts and a "kashima," or club-house, where the Indians congregate to dance and sweat in cold weather.

When the "Rush" arrived, a number of Yukon Indians were gathered about the Western Fur and Trading Company's buildings, having come down with the traders to get supplies for the ensuing season. They were in a despondent condition at that time, owing to the non-arrival of the vessel which was to bring the goods and the little steamer. But when we reported the arrival of their schooner at Onalaska, with the assurance that she might be expected at the termination of her voyage within a few days, there were great rejoicings, and the Indians danced and sang all night.

In this country, where, at this season of the year, there is daylight all night, there is a splendid chance for making a long dance, and where beef is unknown and waterfowl are superabundant, an egg festival in season takes a form

of barbaric gorgeousness that makes a powerful impression on one during his first visit. Here where the natives wear fur parkies, or overshirts with hood attached, and deerskin boots of fancy manufacture and varied hue, and where blubber is considered almost indispensable, there is much for the visitor from civilization to see and consider.

Eggs here in season are estimated by the bushel. Bushels of them are cooked for a meal where there may be a dozen of guests, and hard-boiled goose eggs are eaten with impunity in such enormous quantities as in civilized communities would be considered certain death.

The Yukon salmon are pronounced the finest on the Pacific Coast. Generally speaking, salmon is dry and tasteless. The Columbia River furnishes an almost inexhaustible quantity, but a better quality is taken further north. Sitka is also famous for salmon, but Cook's Inlet and Bristol Bay have those that are better. Yet persons who have tried all say that they are best at the mouth of the Yukon and in adjacent waters. They range in weight from forty to one hundred and twenty pounds, and are very fat and well flavored. When drying in the sun the oil drips out of them, and once dried they may be set on fire and they will burn like pine knots.

Taken raw out of the brine up here, they are eaten with great relish by the civilized, as well as the savage, inhabitants. But accepting such a diet may be only another proof of the readiness with which man adapts himself to his surroundings. There is no beef here, and for some years past there has been little or no reindeer. At the present time moose is out of the question, and rabbits are as scarce as spring chicken. Vegetables are the rarest of luxuries, and berries out of season. Therefore, if one can set him down to a feast of hard-boiled goose eggs or raw salmon from the brine, after having been surfeited on salt pork and corned beef on shipboard, the change of diet is delightful, and the feast is pronounced a success.

There are no gardens at St. Michael's. What could you expect in such a country, although, just now, it is delightful? Last week we had the thermometer down to thirty-two Fahrenheit, and forty was considered "away up."

Here, in Norton's Sound, the ice did not break up till the 7th of June. On the 10th it moved out of the bay, but the weather was cold, wet, and stormy till late in July. In the winter the thermometer goes down thirty to fifty degrees below zero, and it is winter here eight months in the year. The hot days are the

exception, even in summer, although berries grow plentifully, and even ripen well, back in the mountains. We had mosquitoes, too, on the first day of our stay; fine, large, earnest mosquitoes, and barn swallows are plentiful about the redoubt. Yet in spite of all these signs of summer, agriculture will never form an important feature of this part of Alaska.

It would be a peculiar country which would produce walruses and polar bears, watermelons and tomatoes. Walruses go away south of this into Bristol Bay, while St. Matthew's Island, one of our possessions to the southwest of this, is inhabited by polar bears exclusively, neither Chinamen, whites, nor negroes having any recognized rights there. As a purely agricultural proposition I do not hesitate to put it down that polar bears are worse than coons for green corn, and walruses are more discouraging than your neighbor's chickens to a tomato patch. As long as polar bears and walruses are permitted to run at large in this Territory, the corn and tomato crop cannot prosper. Some people may laugh at the meditative walrus, and ask how, with those long tusks, he can eat without standing on his head, but I have observed that where walruses abound ripe tomatoes are scarce, except in cans, and if those amphibious animals

and polar bears are not kept yoked or muzzled there is no use looking for a large corn and tomato crop from Alaska. St. Michaels, or to put it more definitely, Michaelovsky, is seldom or never represented by mammoth vegetables at agricultural fairs. Where the ice crop cannot be got out of the way before the middle of June, where the tops of the hills are morasses all summer, and where the inhabitants will risk being drowned for the sake of blubber, when the oil-skin at home is in a collapsed condition, it is useless to expect gigantic pumpkins and seven-foot cucumbers. In this respect St. Michael's greatly resembles other parts of Alaska.

There may be causes why certain people should come to Alaska and settle, as there have been arguments for making penal colonies in the Aleutian Archipelago. But the reason for the one must be that the immigrants were personal enemies of those who advised their removal, and for the other that starvation should be the lot of all criminals.

But in truth, from the southeast to the southwest extremity of Alaska, the "Rush," which has been cruising around the coast and islands of this Territory from early May to late July, has not visited a spot to which it would be advisable for any person to come from any part

of the States where he may have a home and be able to earn a livelihood. Nor have I seen a man in any position in Alaska who would advise a friend to come out here as a settler, either in trade or agriculture.

We are here in the home of the Innuit or Eskimo. All the way along the coast, from the Kuskoquim across the Yukon, around Norton Sound, out to Cape Prince of Wales, and thence northeastwardly to Point Barrow and beyond, these Eskimos are called Innuits. They are similar in form and feature, they dress similarly, they eat the same sort of food, they have similar modes of conveyance, similar weapons and implements, have the same traditions and speak the same language, with slight local variations.

It has been acknowledged, or it is asserted, that the roots of the language or tongue spoken by these people and the Eskimos of Greenland are identical, the covered skin boat used by both being called "kyack," while the open boat is denominated "oomiak" here and there alike. But this might be accounted for by the fact that both tribes have always lived and hunted seals, whales, and walruses along the coast, and although the northeast or northwest passage is impracticable for ships, communication between

these people must have been frequent, and often, doubtless, involuntary. In any event, it may be assumed as not at all improbable that the Greenlanders were carried over from this continent on the ice, as these men are now occasionally carried out to sea, and sometimes heard of no more, and as their ancestors were probably carried from Asia.

Such a case as this was reported here, when an Indian trader, bringing down a lot of seal-skins from Unalakleet, represented that one of his men was carried away this spring on the ice, and the chief was inquiring if our vessel had found him. It is also known that Captain Tyson and his men were carried two thousand miles on ice from the "Polaris" a few years ago. After the "Rush" hove to under the lee of Diomedes on the fifteenth, she drifted into the Arctic at the rate of two knots an hour: so the fact that the Alaskan Innuits and the Greenland Eskimos use similar words in similar positions is not remarkable. It is astonishing, however, that Indians on the Mackenzie River, in British America, speak the same tongue as those low down on the Yukon, with fifteen or twenty tribes or bands between them which have an altogether different tongue, and which completely prevent anything like communication

between those having the words and idioms; yet such is said to be the fact.

These Innuits or Eskimos of Alaska live by hunting hair seals, whales, and walruses, which furnish them food and oil for their own use and with commodities for trade to interior Indians for furs, of which they make dresses and bed-covering.

The seal supplies them with a hide which, when tanned, is used to cover boat-frames, forming the kyack somewhat similar to the bidarkie of the Aleutians and Kadiakers. These hides, called "lovtak," are in great demand by the Indians up the Yukon for boats, and those same interior men have a desire for oil which makes an interchange of commodities between the coast and inland natives highly advantageous to both and of profit to the white traders, who have come in as middlemen and as purchasers of the surplus oil and furs.

The walrus is hunted for its ivory, which is used in the manufacture of arrow and spear heads, and also many other articles of value and adornment. Any animal, from a whale to wild duck, may be taken by ivory-headed spears, which are more plentiful among these Indians than either firearms or iron-headed weapons.

CHAPTER XVI.

KILLING THE WHITE WHALE.

DURING our stay at St. Michael's, we were so fortunate as to witness the killing of a white whale, or grampus, by the Indians. An Indian who acts as trader at Unalakleet for the Alaska Commercial Company came sailing up the sound one day in a large bidarra. He carried a foretopsail, and came floating in as quietly and gracefully as Elaine's barge, with the dumb boatman, floated with the tide to King Arthur's castle. The bidarra sailed up to the beach, the mast was sent down, and the contents of the boat began to find their way ashore. Twenty-three men, women, and children and two dogs were first landed. Then tents, camp equipage, and salmon, fresh and dried, for the party. After that the men commenced carrying off shoulder loads of dressed sealskins, neatly put up, five in a bundle, till forty-eight large and forty-one of the smaller size were landed. Five bundles of sealskin thongs, lashings for boat-

building — no nails being used — were carried off next, followed by two sealskins of oil, and bundles containing five hundred marmot skins for fur robes. All this came out of an open skin boat twenty-five feet long by eight feet beam, — flat bottom, of course. As the bidarra came in, the natives noticed a school of white whales in the bay. They had been running in great numbers all day without being disturbed. After the freight had been landed, however, one of the men who came down from Unalakleet jumped into a kyack and paddled out. He did not go a mile before he came up with his game, and as one of the largest sized arose to blow, the Indian threw his harpoon, which took a solid hold. At the moment when the whale shot down, the shaft of the harpoon slipped away from the head, which was connected by a line with an inflated sealskin, acting as a buoy. The harpoon was not to kill, but to connect the fish with the buoy. As soon as the lazy Indians loafing on shore and on board the steamer saw that the "beluga," as it is called, was struck, they put out, to the number of a dozen, to assist in the capture and share in the sport and spoils.

As they gathered around they formed a novel and an exciting scene. It was a hunt of a

dozen men in small sealskin boats after a monster with power enough to wreck them all with one blow if it could strike them all together. The floating sealskin indicated the movements of the beluga below, and the little fleet, formed in a semicircle, went paddling for the prey. A beluga cannot remain below very long, and, whenever this one came up to blow, a kyack was alongside, and an ivory spear or half a dozen spears would be darted in through the alabaster skin to the blubber. As the number of spears increased, the beluga became quicker in its motions and more changeful in course, but no matter what the direction taken, or when or where the tortured animal arose, the inevitable kyack was there, and more ivory spears were thrown. Lashing the waters and tumbling about, rolling from side to side in terror, but yet not struck in a vital point, the beluga hurried hither and thither, but there was no escape from the remorseless pursuers. Hither and thither, to the right and to the left, but always advancing in line or circular form, light on the surface of the water as sea-birds, and swift as the fish beneath, flew the buoyant kyacks, impelled and guided by the single-bladed paddle. Each navigator of each bubble of a boat was always ready with another spear until the be-

luga, as it rolled up, looked like a porpoise of huge dimensions bristling with enormous quills.

For two hours the chase continued, extending over a line of at least three miles, the beluga being gradually worried and tired out. Finally it moved more slowly and sluggishly, but as yet spouted no blood, nor did it appear much weakened. It was exhausted and half suffocated for want of air, but, if then released, might live for many years.

Then, as it came quite exhausted to the surface, and slowly turned upon its side, the hunter who had fastened the harpoon into it was at hand and, taking a long lance, thrust it into the body just back of the right fin and, churning it up and down two or three times with lightning-like rapidity, shot away to avoid trouble. The beluga was now mortally hurt, and as he lashed the water into foam and spouted blood for a few moments in death agony, the Indians knew that the chase was over. They fell back and looked on with a quiet air of satisfaction after their exciting hunt, as if they had done nothing out of the ordinary course of events with them. The next matter was to tow their prize ashore, which was done by buoying it up between four kyacks, the owners of which paddled with it to the Indian camp. Here some forms and ceremonies

were necessary before hauling it out of the water and cutting it up. It will not do to cut up a beluga with an axe, and, if there are seals around, it would be flying in the face of fortune to chop wood. On such occasions the fire-wood must be cut with a knife. One hunter will not permit his wife to taste of moose meat of his own killing when it is fresh, but after three days she may have some of it. In some cases, for weeks after a woman has become a mother, she will not be permitted to eat flesh of any kind, or her husband would have no luck in hunting.

In the case of landing the beluga, the tedious ceremonies performed by the successful hunter concluded with trimming a small strip from the edge of each fin, from the tail, and from the upper lip, before the game was hauled out from the water. After he had performed his ceremonies he walked away, leaving those who chose to cut off what they wanted. During the night there was a great feast in camp, the kettles being kept boiling till morning, and as some thirty or forty Indians were working away at it, the beluga was not much more than a skeleton in twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUPERSTITIONS.

THESE Indians believe in the "Shaman," or Medicine Man. The Shaman is not born to his profession here, as among the lower Alaskans. He is the creature of accident or of revelation. He has a dream sometime, which, being verified, he goes off alone into some remote place, where he fasts for several days, after which he comes out and announces himself a Shaman. Now he is ready to heal the sick, to regulate the weather, and to supply game in seasons when it is scarce. His manner of curing diseases is by incantations, no vile drugs being administered. The cure, if effected, is due to his miraculous influence with invisible spirits. If he fail, and the patient dies, he persuades the mourning relatives into the belief that some other Shaman or some old woman bewitched the deceased, and then death is the lot of the offending party who comes in between the doctor and the dead. Some of these Shamans believe in themselves,

but as a rule they know that they are humbugs. There was one at the "Mission" on the Yukon, who, during a scarcity of deer, proposed to go up to the moon and get a supply. It should be known that, according to Innuit accounts, all game comes out of the moon, the origin of which orb and others is thus accounted for: —

In the beginning there was plenty of land, water, and sky, but no planetary system. An Indian, who noticed that the sky came down to the ground in a certain locality, went forward and made holes in it with his paddle. One stroke formed a rent through which the sun shines, another tore away the curtain from before the moon, and smaller stabs with the oar made places through which the stars are now visible. The moon being merely a hole through which the light shines from a land where the supply of game is inexhaustible, all a Shaman has to do for his tribe is to go up and throw a sufficient number of moose or deer down through the hole. There is no doubt in the minds of some that he can do this.

The Shaman at the Mission who volunteered to go up to the moon after game went on a strong pull. He fastened a rope around his body, beneath his arms, and about his neck. Then he went down under the floor of the

"kashima," or club-house, where they have their dances and festivities. He left one end of the line in the hands of some Indians above, with instructions for them to pull as soon as he got out of sight. They obeyed, and pulled vigorously until they became tired. They waited and rested briefly, but, hearing nothing, they pulled for another quarter of an hour. They rested again, and after that took another pull, and kept this up till the exercise became too monotonous even for an Eskimo. Then they went down and found the Shaman dead. They supposed this was a regular part of the programme of going to the moon, and perhaps in this they were not far from being correct. But they believed the Shaman would come back after throwing down enough game from the moon, and they saved him for eight days in a sitting posture. At the end of that time, as the spirit failed to come back, they laid the body away to be called for.

Reindeer were formerly plentiful hereabouts; a few years ago they disappeared, and the next winter they were seen in unusual numbers, not in the moon, but down about Belkoosky, on the peninsula of Alaska. They may come back, but the spirit of the Shaman will probably remain in the moon.

In order to have influence among the people, it is necessary that the Shamans should be possessed of mysterious powers. They perform many feats that would do credit to "materializing mediums." There was one who would permit his hands to be bound together with leather thongs behind his back, and would pull the lashings through his body and show the wrists still fastened in front. But it was indispensable that this miracle should be performed beneath his parka, or skin robe. Of course, he could not draw his bound hands through the parka. On one occasion, the parka being raised unexpectedly to the Shaman, it was found that one of his hands was already half out of the bindings, and it appeared that his wrist was disproportionately large, so that he could release and again insert the hand in the lashings. Such a development generally only proves the presence of unfavorable spirits.

Another element of influence is for the Shaman to be able to repeat some words, or jargon, which the common Indians cannot comprehend. The words may have no meaning or significance, but they have a great influence among the uninitiated. A Shaman who goes aboard of a vessel and picks up some of the phrases of the sailors (such as are called "vigorous Saxon" when

used by great men, but are put down and rebuked as "horrid oaths" in the mouth of the common herd) supplies himself with a sort of ammunition that can be used to great advantage in incantations for game, or to drive out devils. Some of these fakirs eat fire, also, which is a valuable accomplishment; and one Shaman, at Pastolic, between St. Michael's and the mouth of the Yukon, permitted himself to be burned alive to satisfy the people that he was not a swindler. He had an immense pyre of logs arranged near the hut in which all of the people were assembled, and, at a given signal, he took a position in the centre, and the torch was applied. He stood there calm as a tobacco sign, with a wooden mask upon his face, and gazed upon the people as they retired into the hut to "make medicine" for him.

In half an hour they came out, and saw nothing but the mask in the centre, all the logs around it being on fire. The next time they went out all was burned down to cinders, and they again returned to the hut. Presently a slight noise was heard upon the roof, followed immediately by the descent of the Shaman, mask and all. The effect was wonderful, as it was intended to be, but it cost the Shaman about twenty-five dollars worth of skins to his two

accomplices who arranged the hole through which he crawled out under the logs of the pyre, and who worked the people into the hut and out again at the proper time. One of the confederates, who afterwards worked for a white man, confessed the material part he had taken in the mystery. The mask seen in the fire was not upon the Shaman's face, but fastened to a pole.

The origin of man and other animals, according to the account of the up-country Indians, is not without its mystery also. Man and all other animals were created by the eagle and the blue-jay, jointly. After man was nearly finished, the jay proposed to give him wings, but to this the eagle objected, saying that he had already been made too powerful, and to permit him to fly would be to make him altogether dangerous. Some controversy occurred on this, but the eagle would not give way, and consequently the jay would have nothing further to do in the matter, and withdrew from the co-partnership.

That dispute explains why the eagle keeps as far from man as possible, while the jay goes into his camp with impunity, and takes whatever he wants, if he can find it. The jay knows he did all he could for man, and as the man knows it, too, the bird is not molested.

When the Indian dies he goes to that land which the wild geese seek in the winter. It is a long way off, and the entrance to it is a narrow pass which may be travelled only when the snow is melted. Some Indians—the bad ones—have greater trouble than others in making the journey, being obliged to go through a long, dark passage, probably through the Hoosac tunnel. They are not yet determined on the exact nature of that portion of the journey. It is an article of faith which they say they believe in, but do not consider it necessary to comprehend.

Their views and doubts on this question are almost enough to lead one to suspect them of having a religion, but they haven't. They all believe, however, that, once in the promised land they will find clear skies, warm weather, and an inexhaustible supply of game. It is the "happy hunting ground" over again, with variations having their origin in the climate in which the Indian passes his earthly existence.

Living here in an Arctic region, with a brief but delightful summer of three months, mostly composed of daylight, the Indian creates such a heaven as he fancies he would most enjoy. Summer and game are the chief elements of heavenly happiness. Other Indians will incorporate some common want, as a dog and a

pony, and create a heaven accordingly. Starting on common ground, the Indian idea of a future life has changed as the Indian changed, generation after generation, from one locality to another. These Indians don't know what a horse is. The plain Indians cannot fancy happiness without horses, and these ideas influence their view of futurity.

The "Great Spirit," and even the "Great Father" in Washington are beings of whom nothing is asked among the Eskimos. Give them plenty of blubber to-day, and they do not concern themselves about to-morrow or the future. They like plenty of grease, and for that reason would rather encounter a whale than a missionary. They need boats, and would rather capture a hair seal, the skin of which is an important article in their naval architecture, than to receive a trunkful of tracts. They think more of a dog-team than of a free-school five stories high, with double-acting seats and desks. They are a lazy, dirty set, and when the Catholic bishop was up here among them, offering to baptize their children, they said he might if he would pay them for it. When people get religion in that way it does n't take a very strong hold on them, under a generation or two.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOGS AND DRIVERS.

THE old schoolboy notion of the North American Indian as a creature that could run day and night through the pathless woods, from the Alleghany Mountains to the Black Hills, living on panthers and catamounts as he raced along, going for weeks without sleep or rest of any kind, does not fit these Innuits or Eskimos. These fellows seldom walk, they take their exercise mainly in boats during the summer, and compel the squaws to dry enough salmon and collect a sufficient quantity of driftwood to last during the winter. When compelled, however, they can do some good travelling with dog-teams and sledges in the winter. St. Michael's is one of the most noted places for dog teams.

When we landed at St. Michael's we were warmly welcomed by about fifty dogs, thirty-two of which had been provided for by the "Jeannette" and eight more were expected for

the same expedition. These Mahlemute or Eskimos dogs are good-natured fellows, always glad to see a white man, no matter how great a stranger he may be. They stand around the landing-place on the beach waving their bushy tails and lolling out their tongues on warm days in the most friendly manner possible. They do not wag their tails like frivolous society dogs in civilization, but gently and gracefully sway them to and fro like willow branches waving in a summer breeze. Having greeted the stranger as a friend, and by every look and action invited him to make his home among them, they lay the welcoming tail upon the left hip, and walk up the hill with him in a grave and dignified manner, as to say, "Now that you are one of us, no form nor ceremony, you know. If you see anything you want, take it."

To a person nervous on the dog question, to one always expecting to be clutched at the throat by a mastiff, or be nipped on the heel by a cur, to one who believes in hydrophobia in its most terrible form, it cannot be other than a genuine pleasure to meet a party of Eskimo dogs, which seem to entertain a sincere friendship and respect for the white man. Indeed, it is quite flattering when compared with their indifference for the Indian. I say nothing about

the domestic "tiffs" among these dogs, because those are affairs that never ought to be heard of outside the family circle, but it is well known that their ears, when in a normal condition, always stick sharply up, while after being "chawed" they hang down in a way that gives the animal to which they belong a *blasé*, not to say a debauched appearance—and a good many ears are in a morbidly despondent condition.

When the sun shines and the thermometer gets up to sixty, as we had it at St. Michael's, these dogs lie in the shade and pant. When there is a summer shower they stroll about and smile. They have heavy coats for the cold winters, and as yet their masters have not gone so far as to consult their comfort by shearing them in the spring like sheep. So they must sweat and pant in dog-days.

Two teams hitched up to sledges here afforded us an exhibition of how such affairs are managed, and in both instances, as soon as the harness was brought out and laid upon the ground, every old dog about the place was wild with excitement and eager to get into collar and traces. We went up on the "tundra," or wet prairie, back of the redoubt, and with five dogs hitched tandem, had a ride upon the sled, which was hustled along over the grassy hummocks at

a good trot, a man running ahead as a guide, and another holding the handles behind, as with a plow, to steady and keep the sled from going over. These tandem teams were of "American mastiff" breed, the Eskimo dogs being always, till very lately, worked double, one on each side of a line from the sled to a single leader in front. They have their advantages and disadvantages. The American dogs are more powerful than those of Eskimo breeding, and working them in single file requires less trail-breaking in a deep, light snow. But they cannot stand severe cold equal to the Eskimo dogs, which have the shaggy coats, and have been acclimated through generations of predecessors.

The Eskimo dogs are generally of a light brown, frequently mottled with a darker shade of the same color. A few show some white. They are about twice as large, on an average, as the Spitz dog, which is common in the States. While patient and tractable with man, they have their own troubles and frequently make night hideous with their howlings.

There has been much romancing and exaggeration about the capacities of Eskimo dog teams, but from the best accounts it is not prudent to start out on a trip of any considerable distance with more than two hundred pounds to a team

of seven dogs. The traders generally travel with a number of teams together, that the men may be of assistance to each other. The cargo is lashed firmly into the sled, so that, in case of a capsize, it can be righted again without repacking. Under very favorable circumstances, on good roads (smooth ice or well-packed, level snow), long distances are made. Ninety miles in one day of fifteen hours have been traversed with a team of nine dogs. Such drives are, however, of rare occurrence. During the summer the dogs receive but little attention, being left to forage for their food generally, getting a few scraps or a little fish soup occasionally. But in the winter they are valuable property, and are often swapped or sold at fancy prices. When a trader is starting out alone from the base of supplies with his team, all the other traders make a point of being up and about at an early hour on that morning, to see that no mistakes are made about the dogs harnessed, as an eye is always kept to the main chance of gaining a good dog by accident.

The Eskimos are generally a quiet, inoffensive people. From the Kuskoquim northward to the rum region the Indians have a flattering fear of the white man. They, and all other Indians in Alaska having communications with traders

before Seward's purchase, were kept in close subjection by the Russians, who made them feel their power, so that even to this day a white man may go into a "kashima" alone and unarmed, and beat whomsoever he pleases without much risk of meeting with resistance or retaliation: and this among a people who believe in avenging the death of a relative by blood. Of the white man they have a dread, because they believe he represents a power that could crush them out of existence, and would be quick to do it if provocation were given. That is among the more southern Innuits or Eskimos, and above, among the Yukon and Tennanai Indians, where white men go to trade. It is well for the whites that the Indians so regard them, or they would not dare to stay in the country an hour.

Among the coast natives of Cape Prince of Wales and Kotzbue Sound, there is a different condition of affairs. White men would hardly be safe to go among them alone as they do up the Yukon. The mode of traffic up the coast way is for the Indians to come off in their boats to the vessels that frequent these waters, and do their trading on board. Even this is now considered somewhat dangerous for vessels with a small equipment.

It was at Cape Prince of Wales that the Indian massacre occurred in 1877, and as there have been fights and feuds at other points to the northward, in consequence of the presence of rum among them, it is not a good place for a white man to go alone. How long the more southern Eskimos will maintain their present submissive character cannot be foretold, but the presence of an armed ship in these waters every year would go a long way toward keeping these peaceable, and toward preventing the further demoralization of those to the northward, by suppressing the rum traffic.

These coast Indians about Norton Sound have a fashion of clipping their hair from the upper part of the head, leaving the lower portion to grow longer. This is then cut around in a circular fashion so as to have it "banged" on the forehead, after the style of the young ladies of the United States and other highly civilized places. From the forehead the lower line is graduated around in a slope to the back of the neck. Now, when some of the Tennanai Indians come down the Yukon and see this style, they adopt it as the "latest agony," and go home with a swaggering air as if just returned from London and Paris to Oshkosh.

Some of these Indians have their noses pierced.

and a great many have two holes, one on each side of the lower lip, just below the corners of the mouth. In southern Alaska and in British Columbia, squaws have one such aperture, in which they wear an ivory ornament, sometimes an inch in width and a quarter of an inch in thickness, but here the men have two of these wounds. It is not an uncommon thing here to see a young girl going along with a short string of beads pendant from her nose, the sight of which may be very fascinating among the young men of her tribe, but to one not accustomed to such ornamentation the effect at a distance of ten or fifteen paces is not particularly pleasing. A closer view, when one comes to see exactly what it is, is not quite so shocking; and, possibly, if one were only used to it, the fashion would be quite as tolerable as rings in the ears, banging the hair, and chewing gum.

CHAPTER XIX.

PRODUCTS OF THE YUKON REGION.

THERE are no fur seal nor sea-otter skins in the trade among the Eskimos, but there is a character to the furs which tells of the country where they originate. White foxes, the Arctic hare — all white, white wolves, white bear, and white deer skins, are common articles of trade. In addition to these are the land otter, marten, American sable, mink, beaver, red fox, marmot or ground squirrel, and muskrat, as the principal skins. The difference between martin and American sable is one rather of degree than of kind. The Siberian sable, the most valuable of land furs (except silver-gray and black foxes), is darker than the American sable when it is found in the woods where there is a perfect shade. The scarcity of trees makes the fur lighter in color, until, in the marten, it becomes a brown and, rarely, yellow. In the animal itself there appears to be no marked difference between the sable and the marten. The marten

is quick and bold enough to kill the porcupine; and yet it can be easily tamed so that it will spring up in a sociable way and snatch the meat from its master's plate. It is quicker than a cat, and is sure death on rats and mice. Whether it is called marten or American sable the animal is the same. The quality of the marten and sable, as well as the color, is affected by local circumstances. When the snow is soft and light all the winter, the fur gets a bright polish and remains smooth and even on the surface. When the snow becomes hard and sharp, by packing and by thawing and freezing, it cuts the long fine hairs of the skins, producing uneven and harsh edges. This circumstance makes an important difference in the value of the skin.

Wolverines were formerly so much in demand among the coast Indians up this way, that the trading companies purchased them in Cook's Inlet and Bristol Bay for importation here, where they were used by the natives in trimming parkies. The wolverine is not only scarce among them, but it is a "medicine" animal, the Indian killing one setting every sort of food available and lighted candles, or oil-lamps, around the carcase for two days before skinning it. That is the custom among the interior

Indians who kill them. Upon the coast, however, the wolverine is not found, and consequently the skins are in great demand. They are not so largely imported from below as formerly, being now brought down by traders from the upper Yukon. The parka, or fur robes, on the American side of the Straits, are made of the marmot or ground squirrel, trimmed with wolverine around the lower edge of the skirt, the hood having a border of white wolf, which gives the face of the wearer a weird and fantastic appearance. The men's parkas are generally plain, except the wolverine border on the skirt and wolf on the hood; but some of the women's robes are very ornamental. They are cut circular at the bottom of the skirt, before and behind, leaving a space about twelve inches from top to bottom on each side. The lower portions of the skirt of the woman's parka are generally ornamented with white deerskin, land otter and fancy work with thread and dyed feathers.

The finest parkies, however, are of fawn skin, and come from Siberia. They are richly embroidered on the flesh side with silk, in colors, and are very expensive, some rating as high as one hundred and twenty-five dollars. The common parka, such as is used by

the ordinary Eskimos, and such as were provided for the men of the "Jeannette," are cheap, being made of squirrel skins, without ornamentation. They are warm, and warmth is what is required in the Arctic region. The hooded parka and the fancy deerskin boots, which complete the attire so far as visible, make a picturesque dress, admirably suited to the climate and the people. It is stated that the women wear leathern pantaloons beneath this beautiful outer covering.

For people, their habits and customs, implements and dress; for scenery and climate at this season of the year; for salmon and wild-goose eggs, and an appetite that is backed by digestive organs extraordinary, — this is one of the most interesting places to which civilized people, sweltering in the great cities of the Eastern States, could make summer excursions, albeit somewhat out of the route of palace cars. But for a permanent residence it cannot be commended.

There are some half-dozen whites here, and they appear to enjoy life, but their minds are generally occupied by questions of trade, either in having it or preparing for it; and, moreover, they all look forward to a time of leaving the country and returning to the haunts of civiliza-

tion. Besides, they are not completely exiled, as they go down to San Francisco on a furlough once in every two or three years. The thought of these journeys buoys them up before they go and sustains them after they return. So they get through life and manage to keep themselves in flesh.

St. Michael's is a good place for the curiosity hunter to visit. The Indians up this way, with feathers through their noses, their fanciful fur clothing, their skin-boats, their dogs and sledges, their ivory-headed spears and arrows, their stone-lamps for burning blubber, and a hundred other queer commodities, furnish a fertile field for the collection of *curios*. Mammoth tusks are more plentiful about here than forest trees, and they may be had cheap as firewood. Even stone axes are to be obtained occasionally, though they may be numbered with the friction fire-producers — among implements now obsolete. Everything of this kind, or samples of all such articles, are in constant demand at that great repository of wonders, the Smithsonian Institute, which has emissaries in all parts of the country gathering cast-off clothing and worn-out implements among savages.

Of all the *curios* from this country the most inexplicable was found near Fort Yukon several

years ago. At that time a Canadian who was then in the employ of the Alaska Commercial Company, discovered a skull about half a mile from the fort, which he could not "identify." It was apparently from some animal of the bovine kind, but what particular species was a mystery. Having spent some years on the Upper Missouri and on the Red River of the North, he was familiar with the buffalo, and felt satisfied it could not be a buffalo skull; beside buffalos are not found so far north as Fort Yukon, which is within the Arctic Circle.

After puzzling his head over the mystery for months, he sent the skull down to the Company's office in San Francisco, with an account of where it was found. There all efforts to identify it failed, and it was forwarded to the Smithsonian, accompanied by a written explanation of its discovery. The scientists of the Smithsonian, spent long days and nights over it, and though they may not admit the fact, were at a loss to make a very succinct explanation of the character of the animal to which it belonged. It was finally pronounced the head of an extinct species of elk, and experts at once set to work making drawings and plaster models of the extinct animal.

About three years ago the lucky finder of the

skull learned that when Fort Yukon was supposed to be within British America the Hudson Bay Company imported a bull and a cow to that place. The bull died and the cow was killed for beef, having been latterly in a condition of constant mourning for her departed lord and there is no longer any room for doubt that the skull which puzzled the Smithsonian scientists was a cow's skull and nothing less. It is possible that, as soon as the report of this discovery becomes public, the cow's skull may be ground up and used as a fertilizer on the beautiful Smithsonian grounds, the plaster casts reduced to powder, and the records of the learned debates on the subject will be immediately destroyed. The professors may then deny the facts.

Down about Sitka one hear some very possitive talk about "mines," and this breaks out, even up here, occasionally, but in a subdued way. There may be gold up the Yukon, as some people affect to believe, but, if so, the diggings should be wonderfully rich to be profitable. In a country where the winters are of eight months' duration, and where the thermometer indicates sixty to seventy degrees below zero for a month at a time, with forty to fifty degrees for longer periods, the work

done in the summer months ought to be well paid for. At all events, although there have been rumors of diggings, there has been no reliable information of mines in this extreme northern part of our possessions.

So far as at present known this region is fit for nothing but the fur trade, and that will probably never furnish profitable returns for many, if any, more than those now engaged in it. The resources of an agricultural country may be developed, and the products increased, by railroads and steamboats, by immigration, and by improved machinery. The fur trade is such that, the more it is encouraged when open to competition, the sooner it declines and becomes exhausted. This is one branch of trade which will not endure stimulating, and if there is anything of value in the Yukon region, outside of the fur trade, it does not now make any demonstration.

The Yukon is a wonderful river, capable of carrying a tonnage equal to the Mississippi, but there is nothing at present tributary to it that is capable of creating a commerce. Two stern-wheel steamers appear to be capable of satisfying the wants of commerce upon the Yukon at present and for a long time to come. There are said to be immense valleys or bottom lands

of great richness of soil along the Yukon and on some of its tributaries, and upon the Kuskoquim, south of the Yukon; but the richest soil is valueless if the climate be such that nothing for the benefit of man will grow and ripen in it.

There is no timber along this northern coast, although spruce is abundant in the interior, but the value of this cannot be appreciated. Possibly cattle might be raised here if grass would ripen and hay could be procured for winter foddering, but when live-stock may be raised without this trouble and unavoidable expense of this country several thousand miles nearer to market, the advantages of Alaska as a pastoral region can hardly be made apparent during the present century. Alaska is really of little value to our government beyond what is derived from the seal islands, rent, and tax, and the vague benefits from the fur trade in general. But the coast might be surveyed in the interests of navigation, though it might take years to make a reliable chart of that portion from Bristol Bay to Norton Sound. There might be no profit in it, but a great nation ought to know something about its own possessions, and particularly about its coasts and border lines; and the navy or some other department could find employment up here in many places. Profit, however,

in the way of dollars and cents, to be returned at any near day, should not be looked for. If the soundings are ever made, it should only be as a matter of national pride, and that ought to be understood. They could hardly be of any value to the people of Alaska, nor could they do much toward developing a country which is almost entirely without such natural resources as can be turned to any good account. While upon this subject I wish to make a few meteorological observations drawn from official and unofficial records. I am aware that there are people interested in Alaska who maintain that this Territory is suited for agricultural purposes because they honestly believe in the country, and because a few potatoes and hardier roots have been grown here, but in exceedingly limited quantities. A record of the weather up the Yukon was made at Fort Reliance, about latitude 65°, longitude 142° west. Fort Reliance, at which point it was taken from a spirit thermometer by the trader "Jack" McQuestin, winter of 1878–9, is four hundred and fifty miles by the course of the river above Fort Yukon, but not so far to the northward, the latter being just within the Arctic Circle, and the most northerly regular trading-post in any part of the United States or its

Territories. As the climate in the interior is pronounced highly satisfactory by Alaskan enthusiasts, and as several persons declare the possibilities of its agricultural products to be exceedingly great, these figures may be of interest to those seeking information concerning the country.

The highest temperature of the year 1878 at Fort Reliance was 72° above zero, on May 14 and September 13, dates which might be called the beginning and end of summer. The lowest temperature of the winter was 60° below on the 21st of February, 1879. On February 20, four observations, made at 9 A.M., 12 M., 6 P.M., and 9 P.M., aggregated 200, an average of 50° below zero for the entire day. The mean for the lowest month in that winter, February, was 25½° below; the highest mean for any month was in May, 60° above.

On the 6th of February the thermometer indicated a rise of temperature, during a southwest wind, from 28° below at 7 A.M. to zero at noon, to 14° above at 3 P.M., then down again to 18° below at 5 P.M., and 28° below at 10 P.M. This was a variation of 56° in one day. At Fort Reliance, in the winter of 1855–6, as is alleged by one of the traders, a two-pound bottle of quicksilver in a cabin remained frozen for

two weeks. At St. Michael's, Norton Sound, in 1878, the highest thermometer was in July, 73° above, and the lowest in February, 25° below. The winter mean for November, December, February, and March, was 60° below. The summer mean for June, July, and August was 50° above. The yearly mean was 29° above.

The rainfall last year, including melted snow, was but 10.8 inches. The highest velocity of the wind per hour was in August, 74 miles, and the total wind in that month was 11,279 miles. The highest temperature at St. Michael's in five years was 75° above; lowest, 55° below.

It may possibly be objected that the Yukon weather reports quoted above are from an extreme northerly district, which is true; but it is asserted by Alaskan advocates that though the coast line from Cape Fox—the southern extremity of the Territory—to Sitka is too foggy, rainy, and swampy, the inland soil and climate are superior. It is not probable, however, that the country immediately back of Sitka is much more favorable than further to the northward, being of great altitude and removed from the influence of sea currents, though undoubtedly there are some differences, perhaps not always in favor of the Sitka latitude.

As a set-off for the Yukon and St. Michael's record I copy from the log of the "Rush" the weather record of the Aleutian Islands during the month of June, 1879. This record was written down every four hours, or six times a day, from Ukolonoy, just south of the peninsula of Alaska, to Onalaska and Attou, within a belt between 52° and 55° 10′ north latitude, reaching briefly as high as 57°—the fur seal islands. This includes the entire scope of the Aleutian Archipelago, which has been recommended by some persons who never saw Alaska as desirable for the location of penal colonies — where men might agriculturally earn their own livings and get themselves new family relations. Here is the June weather of the Aleutian Islands—about same latitude as Sitka.

Date.	Thermometer.	Weather.
June 1 . . .	mean 39 . . .	Foggy.
" 2 . . .	" 40 . . .	Fog, squalls, and rain.
" 3 . . .	" 39½ . . .	" " " "
" 4 . . .	" 40 . . .	" " " "
" 5 . . .	" 39 . . .	Hail and snow squalls.
" 6 . . .	" 40 . . .	Cloudy and rain squalls.
" 7 . . .	" 41⅔ . . .	Squally and rainy.
" 8 . . .	" 44 . . .	Cloudy " "
" 9 . . .	" 41 . . .	Fog " "
" 10 . . .	" 40 . . .	Squally " "
" 11 . . .	" 41 . . .	Breezy " "
" 12 . . .	" 38 . . .	Squalls, sleet, and rain.

Date.	Thermometer.	Weather.
June 13 . . .	mean 36 . . .	Squalls, sleet, and rain.
" 14 . . .	" 39⅔ . . .	Light breeze, clear.
" 15 . . .	" 37 . . .	Frequent snow squalls.
" 16 . . .	" 38 . . .	Calm, but overcast.
" 17 . . .	" 39 . . .	Light airs, overcast.
" 18 . . .	" 38 . . .	Misty, overcast.
" 19 . . .	" 43 . . .	Foggy, squally, thick.
" 20 . . .	" 40½ . . .	Heavy squalls, thick.
" 21 . . .	" 39⅔ . . .	Thick, rainy, squalls.
" 22 . . .	" 39 . . .	" and rainy.
" 23 . . .	" 42 . . .	" " "
" 24 . . .	" 40⅓ . . .	Changeable, with rain.
" 25 . . .	" 42 . . .	Partly clear.
" 26 . . .	" 39½ . . .	Overcast.
" 27 . . .	" 38⅔ . . .	Partly clear.
" 28 . . .	" 40⅔ . . .	Overcast.
" 29 . . .	" 39 . . .	Foggy and misty.
" 30 . . .	" 46⅓ . . .	Partly clear.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SUMMER CROP OF SEALS.

ON the afternoon of July 23, the "Rush" steamed out from St. Michael's and again headed for the fur-seal island of St. Paul. Morton Sound was as smooth as a mill-pond, and Behring Sea showed only a slight ripple, called up by a soft, western breeze.

The water along the coast from Norton Sound down to the mouth of the Kuskoquim is so shoal that it is dangerous for a ship to attempt the passage, in places, within ten miles of land. Going southward till the island of Nunivak was abeam, the "Rush" was stopped once every hour for soundings, a result of which was that, out of sight of the land, the water was found only deep enough for a good anchorage. The mouths of the Yukon have been depositing sand along the eastern shore of this portion of Behring Sea to such an extent that it is now regarded by all navigators in these waters as particularly dangerous. An-

other element of danger is found in the fact that the coast line, as appears from frequent and reliable observations by such navigators as are compelled to come this way, is set about ten miles too far to the eastward, on all the charts. The entire coast from Nunivak, at least, to Norton Sound, ought to be surveyed, and soundings taken, so as to afford reliable information, where at present too much is left to conjecture.

We experienced the brightest and most delightful weather from St. Michael's till the morning of the 26th, when a thick fog shut down, so that no observation of our position could be had. We were headed for St. Paul's, and by noon had run our distance out; but the weather was so thick it was impossible to know whether we were to the eastward or the westward of the land we wanted to make. In these waters, currents are continually setting vessels out of their courses, which is not so serious a matter when observations can be taken daily and corrections made by the way; but when a vessel is run for days by compass and dead reckoning only, the currents sometimes play sad havoc with the calculations, and a ship may be fifty or sixty miles out of position without anybody being blameable.

The fog around the Seal Islands is peculiar in some respects. The sun may be shining overhead all day, so that the weather appears to be always at the clearing-up point, but the clearing does not take place. The fog hangs low and thick all around, so as to cut off the line of vision not more than a ship-length away, even while the sun is smiling upon the anxious navigator. The fog is of such a thick, creamy consistency, that it wraps itself around the rigging, finally stretching down and dropping off like molasses. The man on the forecastle, officers in charge of the deck, and the captain, try to look through it until their eyes are as red as if they had been half roasted. Having run the distance, according to dead reckoning, about noon on the 26th, the "Rush" was slowed down to the consumption of one bucket of coal per hour, and we began cautiously feeling for the island. The course is altered to the eastward, and soundings are taken every half-hour. They commence at 19 fathoms and gradually run up to 20, 22, 25, 30 and 35. The charts do not give any soundings about St. Paul's, and if we had been near the land we must now be getting away from it.

The soundings being unsatisfactory, the course is changed, and we go slowly feeling our way

on a northern tack. The captain requests those on the "house" with him to keep their weather-nostril open for a sniff of the seal which at this season is very pronounced, but neither smelling nor seeing is able to reveal the land. The vessel is laid on a course of north-northeast, and looking and sniffing continues, but without results. In this manner the afternoon passes, and after supper we find ourselves still hunting for the land, which we know is somewhere stuck away in that thick fog.

It begins to look as if we were doomed to make a night of it, when the captain and pilot, who have been leaning upon the pilot-house, crawl up in a nervous sort of way, trying to make something out of a slightly denser line than the great bulk of the fog. The irregular outline, as of hills here and there, give it an appearance of land, and as the helm is put a-port and the "Rush" comes around to get the wind abeam, it is pronounced land, sure enough, and an odor as of old rain-water in a cistern comes aboard, succeeded by a stronger smell, and, as the land is neared, the outlines and smell become more distinct, the bellowing of bull seals is heard, the blaating of the cows mingles with the roar: the "ow, ow!" of the pups can be distinguished, and, with the sounds

of a mammoth cattle-show, with the odors of a poultry exhibition, magnified to the 6,385th degree, you have a fur-seal rookery on your weather beam late in July. The noise ceases not by day nor by night, and the smell is something never to be forgotten. There may be other odors like it, but there is nothing and no place that has so much of it, for, in addition to the millions of seals living upon one island at this time, there are the carcasses of 75,000 killed, which, divested of their skins, for fashion, now lie decomposing upon the ground. There would be 80,000 carcasses, but some of them have been eaten by the natives.

When we sailed from St. Paul's on the 14th of June, 10,557 seals had been killed for the year's take. On the 16th of July the killing of the 80,000 was completed, and on the same day the last of St. George's quota of 20,000 were laid low. This was the quickest work and earliest close for a full allowance ever known to this seal-killing since the present lessees have been in possession. It was extremely fortunate for the company that the work was done so rapidly, for there has been a hot, dry spell since, which drove even the old bulls into the water, and which would prevent driving at this time.

On our arrival here Dr. White, surgeon of the "Rush," being desirous of studying seal anatomy, made a temporary exchange of position with Dr. Kelly, the physician on the island, by which the latter took charge of the steamer's sick roll, not an alarming one, while the former physicked the islanders and dissected seals for a few weeks. As Captain Bailey was anxious to get down to Onalaska for coal and water, this writer also parted company with the "Rush," remaining to see more of the seals, and to go down on the steamer "St. Paul." We enjoyed a great deal of fur-seal society, varied by vain efforts to get at the sea-bird's nests on the cliffs, and yelped at by impudent foxes.

It is a humiliating thing to have a fox stand off about ten rods and bark at you, or follow you around, smelling at your heels; but they will do it here. Foxes here are plentiful and fat and saucy at this time of year. They can always get plenty of seal meat during the summer and autumn. In the spring they eat eggs and sea-fowl, but in the winter they fall into traps and lose their valuable skins. Going out along the bluffs here, fox-trails may be seen leading in the direction of the places where the sea-birds deposit their eggs, but the birds seem

to know just how far a fox or a man can go along, or up, or down the face of the cliffs, for they take up positions in most unaccessible places, from which they gaze at the would-be intruder with that calm demeanor only acquired by confidence in moral rectitude or physical security.

These sea-birds lay on a shelf of rock so narrow that they cannot sit, but must stand, while setting, with neck stretched up the face of the wall in front of them, and there they remain for weeks, counting the possible chicks from one green and white mottled egg. They guard it as carefully as though it contained a future president of the United States. From the top of the bluff the sea-birds may be robbed by a reckless man let down with a rope; but from the bottom or the side approach they are safe, no matter how easy the way and accessible the position may appear at a few paces distant. We tried it again and again, till the doctor had to be hauled a few times, out of places from which he could not extricate himself, after which he came to the conclusion that it was too late in the season for a white man to rob bird's nests, so he hired some of the natives to do it.

The foxes, however, probably understand the

nest-robbing business better, and no doubt they get occasional eggs in various stages of incubation for breakfast, and have many a spring puffin, murre, or gull for dinner. The mainstay of the foxes for fresh meat in the summer, however, is pup seal, young and tender, being milk nurtured and quite vealy in character. On St. George's, where foxes are more numerous than on St. Paul's, half a dozen of them will get around a yearling seal and drive him back to where they want him, so as to save the trouble of carrying the meat after killing. The St. George's foxes might eat dried seal meat all winter, if they were provident as they are bold and cunning.

The bull seals are not so aggressive in the latter part of July as about the first of June. Early in the season, on the approach of a man, they roar and rush at him, holding ground for their expected families. Now, on being approached by searchers after scientific information, they roar and run away, scrambling over the pups regardless of results, and leaving the mothers to follow as fast as they can, which fine instinct they rapidly obey, and the little black lumps of pups crowd together, turn up their pug noses and bleat to the best of their extraordinary ability.

The toughness of the pups is astonishing. The patriarch weighing six hundred pounds flops and tumbles over a mass meeting of pups, like a runaway cart going through a primary picnic; and after the event the youngsters pull themselves together, dig the sand out of their mouths, eyes, and nostrils, and, finding nobody hurt, all begin to bawl. An old bull seal has no more regard for ten or twenty pups than the devil has for a penny box of matches. In the spring, when the patriarch is alone, he feeds his imagination with fancy pictures of family delights, the larger the family the better; and then he is ready to fight for his rights; but after a few weeks' experience with a large harem and a nursery of corresponding dimensions to look to day and night, the old fellow becomes nervous and is more inclined to fly than to shed the blood of man. At this season a sheep may put an entire rookery to rout.

Fog is indispensable to seal comfort on the rookeries and hauling-grounds, but of course the fog lifts at times, and then the seals seek the soothing influence of sea bathing. Though the fog of this region is thick as molasses, it can come and go in a minute. From clear, bright skies and a horizon at the farthest possible extremity, it changes to an obscurity that

shuts out the view of a man's own nose, and another lightning change brings back the sun.

On the day after our return to the island, the steamer "St. Paul" started to go around from the eastern to the western anchorage to take on sealskins. The distance is about three miles. The atmosphere was clear when she got under way at seven o'clock in the morning, but before she rounded the point, a quarter of an hour later, the fog fell and the land was shut out from view. She should have been at anchor within half an hour after getting under way, but she did not come in on time, and the steam-launch went out along shore looking for her. The "St. Paul" blew a whistle a mile away, the launch answered; and the big steamship and the little launch were blowing and whistling, and hunting for each other till two in the afternoon, when the smaller found the larger and led her in so close that the top of the bluffs hung almost overhead before the land was seen and the anchor let go. Yet the steamer was never a mile from the land during that five or six hours of prospecting.

When the fog lifts and the sun shines, the fur seals take to the water. This is one of the most interesting occasions for watching them. First the young bachelors, which occupy hauling

grounds convenient to the breeding rookeries, go out — free and foot-loose vagabonds that they are — having no family cares to interfere with perfect comfort, so far as perfect independence goes. They dive into the water and spring out of it, they twist and turn and roll and double up and straighten out, float upon their backs, scratch their ears with their hind flippers, rub their noses with their fore flippers, and have a thorough wash, getting the sand out of their fur, cooling off, and making themselves quite comfortable. They enjoy their bathing and take plenty of it when once in the water, having nothing else to do.

As the heat increases the females beg off from their lords and masters, and by ones and twos they get away generally at this time, leaving the pups behind. But even when they are only six weeks old the young ones are also driven down to the water on hot days, and they rapidly learn to swim. When the thermometer went up to fifty-eight in the shade, even the old bulls relaxed somewhat of their rigid rules, and went swimming also, showing how weak even a patriarchal seal may be during dog-days. When the seals are all in the water it has the appearance of being absolutely thickened by them. They twist, tumble, and turn in every direction,

thousands upon thousands of heads and flippers being visible along the bays for miles in length, and extending outward till heads and flippers become mere specks. At times a fleet of them will swim away in line, their noses alone being visible in long rows. Then they start off as if possessed by demons, forcing themselves out clear of the water, and disappearing, to break forth again under and over in a lively chase, indicating wonderful strength and powers of endurance.

Being slightly cooled and refreshed, the bulls are the first to land again, reminded, perhaps, of home affairs and the uncertainty of domestic relations in the seal kingdom. They hasten to the beach, and, taking a hurried look around, set up a roar, and, without paying the slightest attention to the pups, await the arrival of the partners of their rocky homesteads. The "cows," reminded of their progeny, come out next and proceed to find the young. Each cow seems to have a different tone to her snarling, and as she goes peering into every group of pups the youngsters toddle out and greet her, willing to accept nourishment from any mother that will offer it; but though the young all look alike, being of the same age, color, and condition, the dams know, or think they know, their own, and

pick them out from hundreds of other clamorous applicants. Either the cows always know their own by their smell, or, like gentlemen at a party with their umbrellas, each one takes what is believed to be the best, leaving the worst to the latest.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALEUT COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

ON the 30th of July the steamer "St. Paul" sailed out of the fog surrounding the island which bears the same name as herself, having on board a cargo valued at more than a million dollars, for San Francisco. In addition to the sealskins, she had in her hold last winter's take of land furs for the Alaska Commercial Company from the Yukon district. The latter, along with a hundred barrels of seal meat and a large quantity of oil, were discharged at Onalaska, where we arrived on the 1st of August, having been fog-bound outside for half a day. Every year the company brings down a large amount of seal meat, which is distributed gratuitously among the Onalaska people, along with seal oil, which is almost indispensable among these people for food. The oil is a real luxury, and is used liberally, when available, to soften their dried fish. When the large casks, containing two hundred and fifty gallons of oil each, were rolled

up the wharf here, to be pumped into barrels for distribution, the tricklings from the pump were scooped up on Aleut fingers and sipped into Aleut mouths, as the *gamins* on wharves in the East suck the syrup that leaks from barrels of saccharine sweets. But seal meat and oil were not the only important shipments by the steamer "St. Paul" from the seal islands to Onalaska. There came down twenty Onalaska men who had been taken up last spring as laborers, and as Onalaska Aleuts are not so rich as those of the seal islands, their return with their earnings made quite an important event for this community. Yet this was not all that contributed to the importance of the occasion. The steamer brought down four young men from St. George's, and five from St. Paul's, looking for wives. It should be known that the fur-seal islanders are the *crême de la crême* of Aleut society. They earn more money and live better than any other Aleuts, and naturally they become fascinating fellows as soon as they land among the maidens of Onalaska.

Of course there are young women who desire to marry on the fur-seal islands, but the church will not permit marriages within the degree of third-cousin consanguinity, and, what makes the matter more oppressive, a relationship equally

annoying is manufactured at the baptismal font. An Aleut may not marry the son or daughter, nor niece, nor nephew, nor any relation within the seventh degree of his or her godfather or godmother. This is the solemn truth, and although people ought to be glad to have relations, when they are rich, there is such a thing as having too many when they are poor. There is now on St. George's a marriageable young woman, unexceptional from an Aleut point of view, who is so related by ties of consanguinity with what we would call remote cousins, and so bewilderingly connected by baptism with godfathers and godmothers and their relations, that she cannot marry upon the island, although there are plenty of young men there who need wives, and who would like to have her. She got her temper up about it, and said she would never marry off the island, which is a noble sort of self-sacrifice highly worthy of admiration. When the seal islanders come down to Onalaska they lay siege to all the marriageable women in the settlement, and marriages begin at once. Those who cannot get wives here — and some such cases are reported — ask the Company to furnish them free transportation "out West" to Atka, three hundred miles away. At the same time there is a surplus of female population on

the fur-seal islands who won't marry anybody but a fur-sealer, because they have been brought up in an aristocratic way in frame cottages, and provided with wardrobes which enable them to change dresses seven times a day. Such are the advantages and disadvantages of female education among the fur-sealers.

There is not much of the spooney business in Aleut courtship. The steamer landed the wife-hunting seal-skinners on Friday. On Saturday one of them was asked, "Are you married yet?" "Not yet, but I shall be to-morrow." "Who are you going to marry?" "I don't know yet."

On Sunday, two days after the arrival of the wife hunters, three of them were married, two couples at one time and one at another. The three couples would have been executed together but there were only four crowns among the church properties. Crowns and candles are indispensable at these weddings. When marrying a couple, the priest appears in full vestments, with the tall, slightly tapering coffee-pot-shaped velvet hat; and a choir of male voices chant nasal responses to the long service read by his reverence. The couples to be married are stood up in a row, the first step being to place a lighted candle, decorated with a crimson bow, in each hand. Then

the reading commences, and continues till the priest shows signs of fatigue, when the attendant brings out blessed rings on a blessed tray, and each one puts on his or her ring, taken at random from the tray, man and woman being treated alike in this respect. After the rings there is more reading, with responses from the nasal choir; and when the priest becomes exhausted again the blessed crowns are brought out. On this occasion there were four crowns,—two which were old and lustreless, and two which were not only new, but brilliant with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, or what looked like them, and answered every purpose just as well. There stood the two couples, like the kings and queens of a chessboard, with crowns upon heads which did not fit them.

Of the two couples in this case one bride, of a Russian appearance, was dressed in a light silk with a purple stripe; she had a blue bow at her throat, and a pink sash around her waist. Her hair had been braided damp over night, and hung in waves down her shoulders. Her eyes were downcast constantly during the ceremony, and her nose, long and straight, pointed sharply toward the floor in an ominous manner. She wore a cynical sort of smile, like that of an experienced circuit preacher when he knows that

the other brother is getting nothing the better of him in the pending horse-trade. The crown which the groom of this couple wore was much too small for him, being a great, large-headed fellow with a thick neck, high cheek bones, and a twenty-pound fist, so that when he should have bowed he dared not, knowing that if he attempted it his crown would tumble to the floor. On the other hand the bride's crown was altogether too large for her, and, wearing her abundant hair down her back on that day only gave the crown a greater chance to settle. If she had worn it in a coil on the back of her head, or in a braid clubbed up behind, or in a pad on top *à la pompadour*, or *en chignon*, or watteau, or in any of the thousand and one styles known to modern capillary engineering, the crown might have been stayed in some sort of a genteel position. But it settled down too far at first, and every time she bowed in response to the words read by the priest, and every time she nodded in reply to the questions, if she would obey, &c., with the hardly-ever smile upon her resigned face, the crown sunk lower and lower till it got down over her ears; and when the priest led the couple, hand in hand, three times around the little stand that served as an altar on this occasion, she looked like the

most abandoned creature in the world, and as if she did not care who knew it. Of course the effect was all due to the crown coming down over her ears and to the Mephistophelean smile upon her countenance, which deepened as the crown descended, but it was enough to scare all thought of marrying in Onalaska out of the head of any reflecting man.

The other bride was a Japanese-looking Aleut, black hair, narrow, slanting eyes, and in person short and stout. She wore a gingham dress, and was not only very plain, but evidently not a person of high standing in society, in consequence of which she attracted little attention, but she was married as much as any of them. The third couple were joined similarly soon after, and next day the three seal-skinners paid five dollars each for the candles which had lighted them into the promising state of matrimony.

About the nicest-looking lot of Aleut women we saw on this cruise in Alaska were at Kyska for the summer, belonging, when at home, in Atka, and being at the time away with the otter hunters; and if the St. Paul and St. George fellows, could get among them, no doubt they would marry and return home with wives that would breed the most delightful jealousies and

discords among the matrons of the fur-seal islands, who are very proud, considering themselves the *élite* of Alaska society, but who are not all so good-looking as those of Atka; and that fact would place them at a decided disadvantage in the men's opinion, for a great many of these fellows appear to be sufficiently civilized to prefer beauty to brains in a wife.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FATED POLAR CRUISER.

FOR a month or more the daily question had been, "Where is the 'Jeannette'"? She was expected at Onalaska by the first of July, then on the second, third, fourth — the "glorious," and so on through the entire thirty one days of the month. She was expected at Onalaska, at St. Paul's, at St. Michael's. When the "Rush" was steaming down Behring Straits on the evening of the 15th of July, everybody below was called on deck to see the "Jeannette" coming up under full sail. There she was, hull down, with standing jib, foresail, mainsail, maintopsail, and mizzen-sail, as it appeared, booming along with a stiff southwester. Presently our glasses revealed her coal consort on her starboard quarter; but about the same time the distance between the "Jeannette's" fore and mainmast was increasing to a remarkable degree and land was looming up beyond her. The ships were soon transformed into snow that was

seen through the fog before the outlines of Sledge Island — on which it lay in gulches — were discernible, and that was the phantom "Jeannette."

At Onalaska the "Jeannette" and Christmas were finally coupled together in the promise that they were coming, and when the "Rush" arrived down from the north, bringing no tidings and hearing none of the expedition, the long-looked-for "Jeannette" was given up for the year. There were various theories as to why she did not arrrive. One was that San Francisco offered superior advantages as a winter station for a vessel in search of the North Pole. Another, that she had been found unseaworthy. A third, that she had started through the inland passage to Sitka, and been "piled up" on some one of the numerous reefs to be found on that route.

About one o'clock on the afternoon of August 2, it was ascertained that a ship believed to be the "Jeannette" was standing in by Kallekhta Point. Then the fog closed in again and the ship was shut out from sight, having been seen but for a few moments. The pilot of the "Rush" jumped into the middle of a three-holed bidarkie, and with an Aleut before and one behind, went paddling out to meet the strangers. The bidarkie had been long out of sight

in the fog before anything could be seen of the bound-in ship, but finally she loomed up in the fog, and the pilot was upon the bridge, bringing her around the reef that stretches almost across the harbor, within a hundred yards of the settlement. At half-past three in the afternoon of the 2d of August, 1879, the "Jeannette" was moored to the buoy in the inner harbor, within a hundred yards of the "Rush" at anchor, and about the same distance from the "St. Paul" at the wharf. It was the first time that three steamships were seen in this small harbor at one time, but it is not so uncommon a sight these later years.

The "Jeannette" was about as ugly a craft as ever was set afloat, and as she came in with a heavy list to port, she looked like a half-whipped hog making leeway out of a rough-and-tumble fight. She was even uglier than she looked, having been twenty-five days making the passage from San Francisco, about twenty-one hundred miles, and consuming one hundred and sixty tons of coal -- enough to last the "St. Paul"--more than double than the "Jeannette's" tonnage—the trip to the seal islands and back to San Francisco. Five knots an hour was considered good work for the "Jeannette" on the trip up, and six knots was

the very utmost that could be forced out of her. The boilers were ridiculously small for the work to be done, and the engine might have been thrown overboard by Noah as too much of a dead weight to the ark. The whole machinery seemed to have been constructed for a maximum consumption of coal with a minimum of distance, and in this respect it was wonderful. She consumed a ton of coal for about every thirteen miles from San Francisco, while the "Rush," during the month of July, made fifty-four miles for every ton of coal used, and averaged about seven and a half knots per hour, when not stopping for hourly soundings. The "Jeannette" took on one hundred and fifty tons of coal at Onalaska, and was to have another hundred tons at St. Michael's. She was about two months too late to accomplish anything the first year. She ought to have left San Francisco early in May, instead of in July; then she would have had a chance to go as far as any ship has ever been and prepare for winter. In addition to the coal taken on here, the "Jeannette" also received from the superintendent of the Onalaska district for the Alaska Commercial Company twenty-five "kamleikas," or waterproof skin shirts, twenty-five seal blankets, sixteen marmot blankets, thirty reindeer skins,

twenty-five reindeer sleeping-bags, sixteen reindeer coats, twenty-seven marmot coats, a lot of mittens and snow-shoes, and twelve thousand "eucali" or dried salmon. These articles, as well as the coal, were donated by the Alaska Commercial Company; General Miller, then president, having provided Captain De Long with *carte blanche* for anything he might want, if procurable at their stations.

As the "Rush" was to leave Onalaska on August 4th for the Island of Nunivak, the "St. Paul" being announced to sail for 'Frisco on the 5th, and the "Jeannette" to struggle out on the 6th or 7th for St. Michael's, a dinner was given at the company's house to Captains Bailey, Erskine, and De Long, and officers of the "Rush" and "Jeannette." It was a quiet, sociable dinner, without toasts or speeches, and a very pleasant gathering it proved to be.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WRECK.

ON the 30th of July, 1879, a ship's dingy with foresail and jib set came sailing into the harbor of Onalaska, having four persons aboard. These persons were Mr. Beresford, mate, a colored man, — second mate, and two seamen of the once notorious brig "Tunandra," a trader, with such a reputation for selling rum to the Eskimos that her late captain, Ravens, could not get a clearance from the custom-house in San Francisco; so she was sent out in command of Mr. Thomas, formerly her mate, and Beresford was shipped as navigating officer. She cleared from San Francisco for the Sandwich Islands for the purpose of taking rum aboard, and Ravens, her old captain, got a license as pilot of the "Ellen J. McKinnon," starting north in her. She was wrecked; Captain Ravens being washed out of the rigging, and all hands losing their lives, some suddenly, and others by the slow process of starvation, except one man, who was rescued after fifteen

days of horrible suffering on the wreck, which continued to float, water-logged. The "McKinnon" had a cargo of general merchandise on board for trade among the Aleuts and the Indians of Behring Straits, while the "Timandra" had rum, arms, and ammunition as the chief commodities in her cargo. The two vessels were to have met at one of two places agreed on, and, after interchanging cargoes, proceed to the trading-grounds under command of Captain Ravens.

On the 8th of March the "Timandra" got under way from San Francisco. She left Honolulu April 9, and arrived without accident in Oonimak Pass, to the eastward of Onalaska, May 4. Not finding the "McKinnon" here, and supposing her to be in advance of him, Captain Thomas stood for Nunivak, and arrived off that island on the 10th of May. To his surprise the "McKinnon" was not there, but, not doubting that she would come, and not knowing what to do without the presence of Captain Ravens or further orders, the brig was kept off and on at Nunivak without any event of interest occurring until May 20, when she struck on a sand bar off the northwest point of the island, about two and a half miles from shore.

Immediately after striking the brig commenced

to fill, and the pumps were put to work. Landing on the west side was impracticable, but under the southwest point a bight makes in to a smooth beach, and in westerly or northerly weather it affords a very good anchorage. In southerly weather no vessel can remain there in safety. Immediately on getting under the lee of the island a portion of the crew was set to breaking out the cargo, and the remainder worked the pumps. In getting the goods ashore, valuable assistance was rendered by the Nunivak Indians or their squaws, for the men, like all other savages of their sex, can afford to despise work. Discharging cargo continued till the 23d, the men having been kept at it day and night, on which date, everything of value being landed, the vessel was abandoned, and she soon sank in the sand. The ship's company consisted of twelve persons, all told, including Mr. Barker, the supercargo.

After securing the cargo the castaways turned to and housed themselves and the goods. Having had a lot of lumber in the ship for East Cape, they took scantling enough for a frame and boards for flooring. The frame being covered with sails stripped from the sunken vessel, which had been run in as far as possible and beached, they succeeded in making a canvas house.

At that time there was deep snow upon the ground and the weather was quite cold, so two stoves were put up in the house. All of the finer goods were kept in this structure, where all the hands lived; but the less valuable and less perishable part of the cargo, except bulky articles, were stowed away in casks and barrels. Here in this canvas house, on an island seldom if ever visited by ships or civilized beings, surrounded by the lowest of barbarians, though a peaceful people, with whom they could not exchange an intelligent word, the men of the lost vessel all lived for two months, and some of them longer.

The Indians of Nunivak subsist on venison and fish, which they eat raw, and clothe themselves in deerskin coats or parkies and sealskin pantaloons. They live in low, earthen huts, with underground communications, and, as a result of this sort of life, are subject to coughs, asthma, and lung diseases generally. They know nothing of the white man nor his ways, but, on seeing the sailors cooking, tried the experiment in an almost crude way, eating some half-roasted, half-burned walrus meat as a culinary experiment. They knew nothing of bread before the arrival of the shipwrecked sailors, but ate it eagerly when it was offered them.

Anything with the savor of salt in it they rejected with signs of repugnance.

The Indians brought in venison whenever it was wanted, giving a quarter for a box of percussion caps or a little tobacco. They use old-fashioned muzzle-loading guns obtained from Indian traders, who cross over from the mainland on the ice. In addition to deerskins they have some red foxes, the skins shown, however, being of inferior quality, probably rejected by the mainland Indians, who act as agents in many parts of Northern Alaska for the companies which control the fur trade from Cook's Inlet to the Arctic.

About fifty yards from the house of the shipwrecked party was a village containing forty or fifty Indian men, women, and children. The men were almost constantly about the white men's camp, but the women only came at intervals. When the crew were engaged getting the cargo ashore, the squaws assisted them under orders from the men, who had their orders from the chief. After the work was completed the squaws disappeared, and were never seen again except for a few days at a time.

Some time after abandoning the brig the chief of the village took sick, and although he received every attention that the whites could render (for

he had been very friendly with them), he died. The corpse was not cold before the Indians wrapped it, tying the arms and legs so as to keep the body in a sitting posture, and carried it to a sort of cairn, or pile of stones, where it was set up on a floor or foundation and covered with loose rocks. All the chief's personal property, even to a Malacca cane given him by the whites, was deposited with the body. As soon as that ceremony had been performed, the oldest widow in the village tore the parka and pantaloons from the late chief's widow and threw them, along with the other property, upon the pile that marks his departure for that southern clime to which the wild geese fly in the fall, according to the belief of the Indians along that part of the coast.

Nunivak is a cold, cheerless place, ice remaining in the little stream near the village all summer, as the castaways were given to understand. Ice is the great preservative among these Indians, their only mode of keeping meat, which is killed when fattest, in the winter, being to freeze it. Codfish and smelts are plentiful about the island, and salmon of the finest quality are taken in the little stream near the village. As soon as spring weather sets in, the men of Nunivak bathe freely, but the women are represented

as being most filthy, never indulging in such nonsense as the bath. The island is almost constantly enveloped in fog, so far as is known to the sailors; and it is altogether a fair sample of Alaska, though there are a few more attractive spots, perhaps, and a great many more too much like it.

Among the officers of the "Timandra" was Mr. Beresford, first mate and navigating officer. As soon as everything that could be done after abandoning the brig had been accomplished, he set about making arrangements to get away before winter should set in and shut him off from all hope of seeing civilization again that year. He proposed that Captain Thomas should make an effort to reach the Kuskoquim, but the captain, unacquainted with the people there, did not appear to relish the idea of venturing out to take the chances of landing among worse savages on the mainland than those met upon the island. It was determined, however, to build a large boat, if possible, with which purpose in view work was commenced by laying a keel, cut from the main boom of the brig, for a five-ton craft. Cask staves were used for knees, and a stem and stern post constructed of the ship's rail. Lumber from the cargo was taken for planking, but owing to a want of steaming facilities it did

not work very well, as spruce does not bend readily, except under more favorable circumstances than those attending the shipwrecked mariners on Nunivak. A boiler, originally constructed for trying blubber on board the vessel, was used for steaming the planking, but the boards broke more frequently than they bent. It was a question, too, whether, even if the boat were once planked, she could be caulked and made water-tight. So, about the 20th of June, having been at the work for three weeks, it was given up.

Then the mate went to work on another scheme. He built up the dingy, or ship's boat, about six inches on the sides, decking her over, leaving only a sort of coxswain's box aft, and concluded to go in search of relief. He stepped a foremast, and shipped a jibboom, took in his chronometer, sextant, a ship's compass, and ten days' provisions. The first and second mates, and two men, one of them sick, went aboard this craft, so small that only two could remain up at a time, the others being required to lay beneath the decking in order to afford room for steering and handling the sails. Mr. Beresford set his course for Onalaska, leaving Nunivak July 26, for a four-hundred mile voyage.

On the first and second days he got observa-

tions, but after that the fog shut out everything, till on the 30th of July he made land. While pulling along to find out if the place were inhabited, he saw a vessel becalmed, and, boarding her, he found himself upon the deck of the schooner "St. George," of the Alaska Commercial Company. The shipwrecked sailors were directed to the entrance of Onalaska harbor, which they readily made, and thus in four days they had sailed four hundred miles in an open boat, and were where they could hope for relief for their companions cast away on Nunivak.

This voyage from Nunivak direct to Onalaska in four days was extraordinary, as a storm would have swamped the boat, and if she had struck one of the common cross-currents, often encountered in Behring Sea, she might have been carried a hundred miles out of her course before the fog lifted. A continued calm of ten days before he started, a favoring breeze the entire distance, and a thorough knowledge of his business, carried the mate and his companions through in safety.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

THE reader who may have considered the subjects treated of in the foregoing pages will not find much in them to encourage him to seek a home in Alaska. To an impartial observer it would seem wicked to suggest emigration from any part of the United States to a land the coast lines of which are characterized by snow, rain, and fog to such an extent as to almost entirely preclude the ripening of any sort of vegetables suitable for man's food, and the interior of which, so far as known, is largely composed of ice-water bogs in summer and frozen lakes for eight out of the twelve months in the year. Plainly, so far as I could see or hear, Alaska is as illy adapted to grazing as to farming purposes. The climate is against either of those industries, and though the possibility of a family's existence by farming or cattle raising in Alaska is not denied, its practicability is doubted. Certainly a more comfortable live-

lihood may be gained in any of the States or Territories, as they are known and understood, than in Alaska. The timber resources of Alaska are limited both in quantity and quality, although this fact is not generally believed. Coal has been found, but in an undeveloped condition. The precious metals are reported in rich deposits from time to time, but statistics of bullion shipments from Alaska have no existence, and there is little doubt that up to the present time more money has been expended by deluded prospectors in outfits than has ever been dug out of the earth or crusted in the rock of that vast region. There are plenty of fish in Alaska, and opportunities still remain for the location of salmon-curing establishments. It will probably be made evident in a short time that the Alaska salmon are superior to any caught so far south as the Columbia River.

The question of a form of government for Alaska is receiving considerable attention, and it appears that some Congressional action in this direction must soon be perfected. For this purpose it would seem to be desirable that the Territory should be divided, and a simple form of government provided where it is needed — and where only it would be practical at present — in that portion from Mount St. Elias to Cape Fox.

Any attempt to enforce and keep up a Territorial form of government throughout the remainder of that vast region would probably result in failure for years to come. In any event, no farmer, mechanic, or small trader who can gain a livelihood in any other State or Territory ought to risk his happiness in Alaska.

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